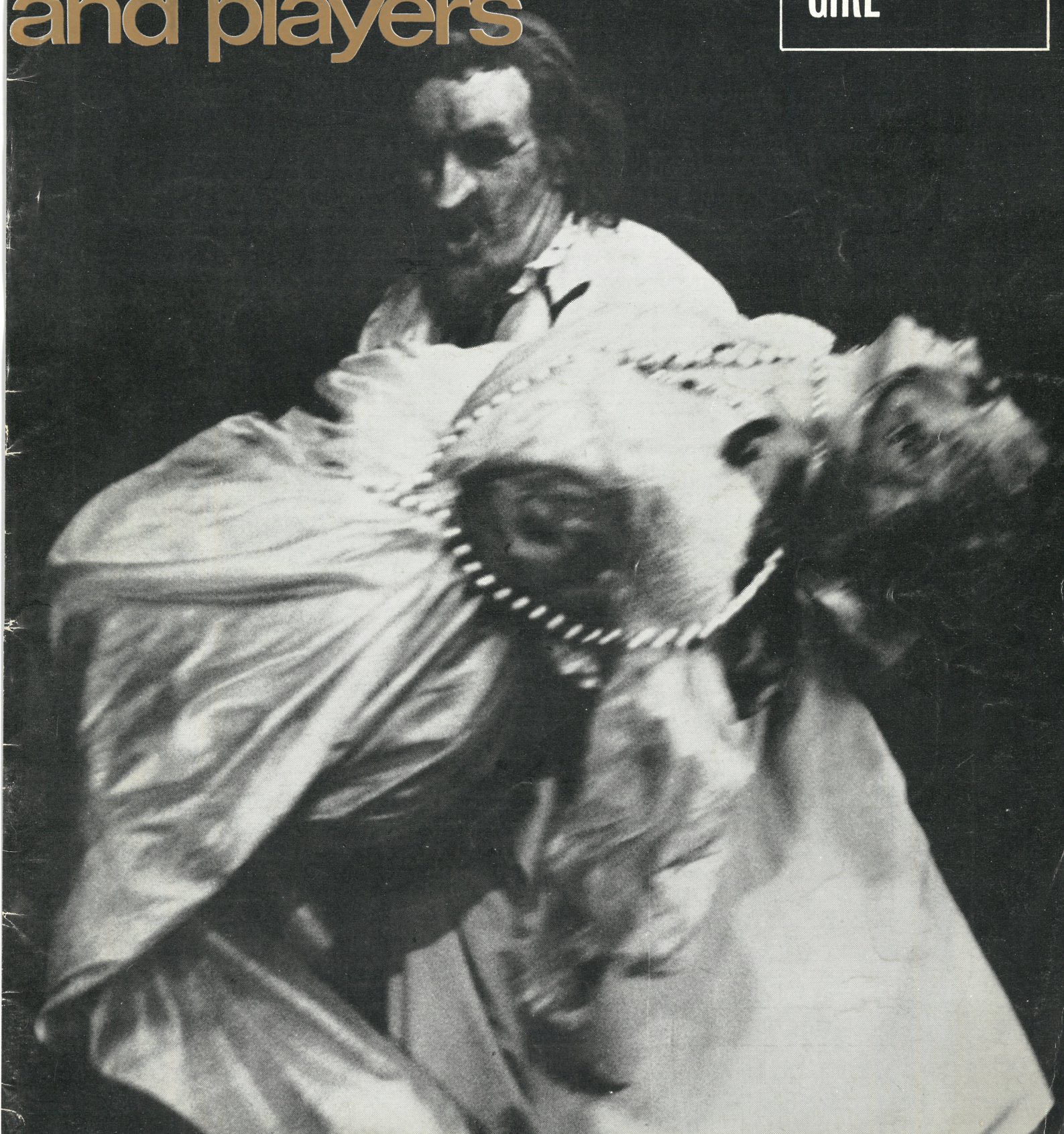


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# plays and players

Full text of  
**THE ITALIAN  
GIRL**

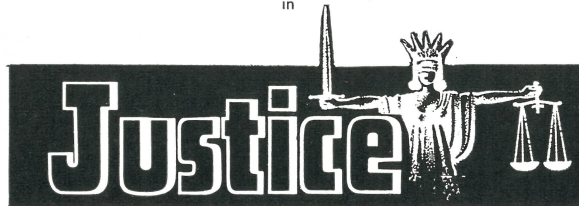




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in



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FAIRFAX**

**RICHARD  
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in

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## BEST IN TOWN

**Play:** Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead.  
**Revival:** All's Well That Ends Well.  
**British Musical:** The Boy Friend.  
**American Musical:** Fiddler on the Roof.  
**Whodunit:** Wait Until Dark.

## TEN AT THE TOP

Longest runs in London on March 1:

The Mousetrap ... ..	6,339
The Black and White Minstrel Show ... ..	3,594
Spring and Port Wine ... ..	982
Charlie Girl ... ..	922
There's a Girl in My Soup ... ..	714
Wait Until Dark ... ..	665
Big Bad Mouse ... ..	570
Fiddler on the Roof ... ..	442
The Desert Song ... ..	356
The Flip Side ... ..	262

## THEATRES

**ADELPHI** Charlie Girl.  
**ALDWYCH** Royal Shakespeare Company. All's Well That Ends Well; Macbeth; Under Milk Wood.  
**AMBASSADORS** The Mousetrap.  
**APOLLO** The Flip Side.  
**CAMBRIDGE** The Desert Song (from February 13).  
**COMEDY** The Boy Friend.  
**CRITERION** Mrs Wilson's Diary.  
**DRURY LANE** The Four Musketeers!  
**DUCHESS** Wait Until Dark.  
**DUKE OF YORK'S** Hay Fever (opens February 14).  
**FORTUNE** You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown.  
**GARRICK** Let Sleeping Wives Lie.  
**GLOBE** There's a Girl in My Soup.  
**HAMPSTEAD THEATRE CLUB** Bakke's Night of Fame (to February 17). Little Boxes (opens February 26).  
**HAYMARKET** The Importance of Being Earnest.  
**HER MAJESTY'S** Fiddler on the Roof.  
**LYRIC** Heartbreak House (to February 17). The White Liars/Black Comedy (opens February 21).  
**MERMAID** The Black Girl in Search of God (to March 2).  
**NEW** Spring and Port Wine.  
**OLD VIC** National Theatre Company. As You Like It; The Dance of Death; Flea in Her Ear; Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead; Tartuffe; Three Sisters; Volpone.  
**PALACE** Cabaret (opens February 28).  
**PALLADIUM** Robinson Crusoe.  
**PICCADILLY** Dear Octopus.  
**PRINCE OF WALES'** Sweet Charity.  
**QUEEN'S** Halfway Up the Tree.  
**ROYAL COURT** Twelfth Night (to February 24). A Collier's Friday Night (opens February 29).  
**ST MARTIN'S** Justice.  
**SAVOY** According to the Evidence.  
**SHAFTESBURY** Big Bad Mouse.  
**STRAND** Number Ten.  
**VAUDEVILLE** The Bells.  
**VICTORIA PALACE** The Black and White Minstrel Show.  
**WESTMINSTER** Annie.  
**WHITEHALL** Up roar in the House.  
**WYNDHAM'S** The Italian Girl.

## FIRST NIGHTS

### February 13—No Man's Land

*Empire, Sunderland, Co Durham. Sunderland 3274*  
 Prospect Productions present the first performance of a new play by John Wilson, based in part on his earlier work, *Hamp*. It has an all-male cast, including Gary Bond, Gordon Reid and Dinsdale Landen, and the director is Toby Robertson.

### February 14—Hay Fever

*Duke of York's, St Martin's Lane, WC2. TEMple Bar 5122*  
 Celia Johnson as Judith Bliss with Roland Culver as her long-suffering husband in a new production of Noël Coward's comedy, directed by Murray Macdonald. Prunella Scales plays Jackie, with Diana Fairfax as Myra, Richard Vernon as Richard, Michael Graham Cox as Sandy, Lucy Fleming as Sorel, Simon Williams as Simon and Betty Baskomb as Clara.

### February 21—The White Liars/Black Comedy

*Lyric, Shaftesbury Avenue, London, W1. GERard 3686*  
 Ian McKellen, James Bolam and Dorothy Reynolds complete the cast of the first comedy, a new play by Peter Shaffer presented in a double-bill with his now famous *Black Comedy*. Angela Scoular, Robert Flemyng, Liz Fraser and Ken Wynn join the company for the second play, and both are directed by Peter Wood and designed by Alan Tagg.

### February 26—Little Boxes

*Hampstead Theatre Club, Civic Centre, Swiss Cottage, NW3. 722 9301*

Two one-act plays by John Bowen, with a common theme of isolation in modern society. The first, dealing with an elderly couple, is a comedy; and the second, about two young girls, is treated as a farce. Sylvia Coleridge, Angela Thorne, Anna Cropper, Larry Noble and David Cook head the company, directed by Philip Grout. The designer is J Hutchinson Scott.

### February 26—Call Me Jacky

*The Playhouse, Beaumont Street, Oxford 47133*  
 Sybil Thorndike appears with the Oxford Playhouse company in the world premiere of Enid Bagnold's new play. The director is Frank Hauser.

### February 28—Cabaret

*Palace, Cambridge Circus, W1. GERard 6834*  
 Judi Dench as Sally Bowles with Lila Kedrova as Fraulein Schneider in the American musical version of the John van Druten/Christopher Isherwood stories set in pre-war Berlin. *Cabaret* has been one of Broadway's biggest hits since its opening there in November, 1966. Harold Prince directs the London production.

### February 28—Boots with Strawberry Jam

*Nottingham Playhouse, Wellington Circus. Nottingham 45671*  
 John Neville as GBS and Cleo Laine as both Ellen Terry and Mrs Pat Campbell in a new musical play by John Dankworth and Benny Green about the life and loves of Bernard Shaw. Wendy Toye directs.

### February 29—A Collier's Friday Night

*Royal Court, Sloane Square, SW1. SLOane 1745*  
 First play in a D H Lawrence trilogy to be presented in repertory by the English Stage Company. The cast is led by Anne Dyson, Victor Henry, John Barrett and Christine Hargreaves and is directed by Peter Gill. It will be followed on March 7 by *The Daughter-in-Law* and on March 14 by *The Widowing of Mrs Holroyd*.



## PLAYS

**BAKKE'S NIGHT OF FAME** (*Hampstead Theatre Club*, 722 9301). John McGrath (author of *Events While Guarding the Bofors Gun*) has adapted a novel called *The Danish Gambit* by William Butler. The setting is the condemned cell of an American prison, and the rôle of the condemned man, Bakke, is played by Johnny Sekka. (To February 17.)

**THE BELLS** (*Vaudeville*, 836 4871). Marius Goring as Mathias, the murderous innkeeper, in the Victorian melodrama which provided Henry Irving with his most famous rôle. Evs 7.30, Sats 5 and 8.15.

**BLACK GIRL IN SEARCH OF GOD** (*Mermaid*, 248 7656). Edith Evans plays the Narrator in this adaptation by Basil Ashmore of Shaw's *The Adventures of the Black Girl in Search of God*. A young West Indian actress, Nona Hammond, plays the Black Girl, and the cast also includes Anthony Newlands, John Westbrook, Paul Hardwick, Jessie Evans and David Markham. The setting is composed of Rousseau-like jungle backcloths, and the music, composed by Kenny Graham, is performed on-stage by Nigerian drummer Adetola Bashorun. Basil Ashmore directs. An adaptation of Shaw's short story, *Aerial Football* precedes the *Black Girl*. (To March 2.)

**COLLIER'S FRIDAY NIGHT** (*Royal Court*, *Slo* 1745). First of three D H Lawrence plays to be presented in repertory by the English Stage Company. The other two—*The Daughter-in-Law* and *The Widowing of Mrs Holroyd* open on March 7 and 14. All three are directed by Peter Gill. The company for the opening play includes Anne Dyson, Victor Henry, John Barrett and Christine Hargreaves. (Opens February 29.)

**DANCE OF DEATH** (*National Theatre, Old Vic*, 928 7616). Strindberg's great drama—an explosive and devastating picture of a marriage that has become a battleground. Laurence Olivier as the Captain, Geraldine McEwan as Alice and Robert Lang as Kurt. Glen Byam Shaw directs. In repertory. Evs 7.30, Mats 2.15. Curtain: 10.15.

**THE ITALIAN GIRL** (*Wyndham's, Tem* 3028). A new play by James Saunders and Iris Murdoch based on Miss Murdoch's novel. A Bristol Old Vic production directed by Val May and first seen in Bristol last December. Elizabeth Sellars and Richard Pasco head a company including Jane Wenham and Timothy West.

**JUSTICE** (*St Martin's, Tem* 1443). Eric Portman, Richard Briers and Barbara Murray in Peter Bridge's revival of Galsworthy's social drama first seen in 1910, directed by Anthony Sharp.

**MACBETH** (*Aldwych, Tem* 6404). Paul Scofield and Vivien Merchant in Peter Hall's RSC production, first seen at Stratford last autumn and now returned from a triumphant visit to Russia and Finland. Evs 7.30, Mats 2. In repertory. Curtain: 10.10.

**NUMBER TEN** (*Strand, Tem* 2660). Alastair Sim as the Prime Minister with Dulcie Gray as his wife, Michael Denison as the Defence Secretary and John Gregson as the Foreign Secretary in Ronald Millar's adaptation of the novel by William Clark. The setting is Downing Street after the next General Election. Evs 7.45, Sats 5 and 8.30: Running time: 2½ hours.

**ROSENCRANTZ AND GUILDENSTERN ARE DEAD** (*National Theatre, Old Vic*, 928 7616). An unusual play by Tom Stoppard, described as an existentialist postscript to *Hamlet*. John Stride and Edward Petherbridge play the name parts, and Derek Goldby directs. Evs 7.30, Mats 2.15. In repertory. Curtain: 10.20.

**THREE SISTERS** (*Old Vic*, 928 7616). The National Theatre in Chekhov directed by Laurence Olivier, with Joan Plowright as Masha, Louise Purnell as Irina, Jeanne Watts as Olga, Robert Stephens as Vershinin and Derek Jacobi as Tusenbach. Scenery by Josef Svoboda. Evs 7.30, Mats 2.15. In repertory. Curtain: 10.20.

**UNDER MILK WOOD** (*Aldwych, Tem* 6404). The RSC's Theatreground production of Dylan Thomas' play, directed by Terry Hands, with Sheila Allen, Susan Fleetwood, Emrys James,

# plays

Peter Geddis, Peter Gordon, Richard Moore and Bruce Myers. Evs 7.30, Mats 2. In repertory from March 4.

## COMEDIES

**ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL** (*Aldwych, Tem* 6404). The RSC's most popular Stratford production last season now joins the London repertory. Ian Richardson is Bertram with Catherine Lacey as the Countess, Lynn Farleigh as Helena, Sebastian Shaw as the King and Brewster Mason as Lafeu. John Barton is the director. Evs 7.30, Mats 2. In repertory. Curtain: 10.5.

**AS YOU LIKE IT** (*National Theatre, Old Vic*, 928 7616). An all-male production directed by Clifford Williams, with Ronald Pickup as Rosalind, Robert Stephens as Jaques, Jeremy Brett as Orlando and John Stride as Audrey. Evs 7.30, Mats 2.15. In repertory. Curtain: 10.15.

**BIG BAD MOUSE** (*Shaftesbury, Tem* 6596). Jimmy Edwards and Roy Castle in a new comedy by Philip King and Falkland Cary, set in the office of a biscuit factory. Mon-Thurs 8.15, Fri and Sat 6.15 and 8.45. Running time: 2 hours 5 minutes.

**DEAR OCTOPUS** (*Piccadilly, Ger* 4506). Dodie Smith's famous comedy, first performed in London in 1938, about three generations of the Randolph family all assembled to celebrate the Golden Wedding anniversary of Dora and Charles. In this revival they are played by Cicely Courtneidge and Jack Hulbert. Other important rôles are played by Richard Todd, Lally Bowers, Joyce Carey, Ursula Howells, Perlita Neilson and Valerie White. Evs 7.45, Sat 5 and 8.15, Wed 2.30. Running time: 2 hours 40 minutes. (Transferred from the Haymarket.)

**A FLEA IN HER EAR** (*National Theatre, Old Vic*, 928 7616). Georges Feydeau's hilarious farce translated by John Mortimer and directed by Jacques Charon, with Geraldine McEwan, Robert Lang, John Stride and Edward Hardwicke. Laurence Olivier now plays the small part of the butler, Etienne. Evs 7.30, Mats 2.15. In repertory. Curtain: 10.

**THE FLIP SIDE** (*Apollo, Ger* 2663). A new comedy by Hugh and Margaret Williams, with Anna Massey, Toby Robins, Ronald Lewis and Patrick Allen. Evs 8.15, Thurs 2.30, Sat 6 and 8.40. Running time: 2 hours.

**HALFWAY UP THE TREE** (*Queen's, Reg* 1166). Peter Ustinov's new play—a comedy of war between two generations in a family headed by Robert Morley as an eccentric general and Ambrosine Phillpotts as his wife. John Gielgud directs. Evs 8, Sat 5.30 and 8.30, Thurs 2.30. Running time: 2 hours 20 minutes.

**HAY FEVER** (*Duke of York's, Tem* 5122). Noël Coward's famous comedy about a charmingly dotty actress and her long-suffering family. Celia Johnson and Roland Culver play Judith and David Bliss; other important rôles are played by Prunella Scales, Diana Fairfax and Betty Baskomb. (Opens February 14.)

**HEARTBREAK HOUSE** (*Lyric, Ger* 3686). The Chichester Festival production of Shaw's comedy, directed by John Clements, who also plays Captain Shotover, with Irene Worth as Hesione Hushabye, Diana Churchill as Lady Utterword and Doris Hare as Nurse Guinness. Evs 7.30, Thurs, Sat 2.30. Curtain: 10.30. (To February 17.)

**THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST** (*Haymarket, Whi* 9832). A new production of Oscar Wilde's best comedy, with Isabel Jeans as Lady Bracknell, Flora Robson as Miss Prism, Daniel Massey as John Worthing, John Standing as Algy and Robert Eddison as Canon Chasuble.



# running

CORRECT ON GOING TO PRESS—  
CHECK TIMES WITH DAILY PRESS

LET SLEEPING WIVES LIE (*Garrick, Tem* 4601). Leslie Crowther co-stars with Brian Rix in a farce about an American director vetting two executives of a British firm he is about to take over. Elspet Gray, Derek Farr and Leo Franklyn also get firmly involved in the goings-on. Evs 8, Wed 2.45, Sat 5.45 and 8.30. Running time: 2½ hours.

LITTLE BOXES (*Hampstead Theatre Club, 722* 9301). John Bowen's two short plays—a comedy and a farce—about two sets of people who have become out of touch with the world around them. Sylvia Coleridge, Angela Thorne and Anna Cropper head a company directed by Philip Grout. (February 26-March 23.)

MRS WILSON'S DIARY (*Criterion, Whi* 2136). An 'affectionate lampoon' by Richard Ingrams and John Wells, based on the *Private Eye* feature. Joan Littlewood directs. Transfer from Stratford East. Evs 8.15, Sat 5.45 and 8.45, Thurs 3. Running time: 2 hours.

SPRING AND PORT WINE (*New, Tem* 3878). Bill Naughton's long-running comedy with Rupert Davies and Joyce Heron now appearing as the central characters. Transferred from the Apollo and playing at 'popular prices'. Mon-Fri 8, Tues 3, Sat 6 and 8.40. Running time: 2½ hours.

TARTUFFE (*National Theatre, Old Vic, 928* 7616). John Gielgud makes his first appearance with the NT, and Tyrone Guthrie directs his first play there—Moliere's classic comedy about religious hypocrisy, in a verse translation by Richard Wilbur. Robert Stephens plays Tartuffe with John Gielgud as M Orgon and Joan Plowright as Dorine. Evs 7.30, Mats 2.15. In repertory. Curtain: 9.45.

THERE'S A GIRL IN MY SOUP (*Globe, Ger* 1592). Terence Frisby's long-running comedy about a fortyish food journalist (now played by Gerald Flood) and his affair with a jet-propelled girl-friend (Belinda Carroll). Mon-Fri 8.15, Sat 6 and 8.40, Mat Wed 2.30. Running time: 2½ hours.

TWELFTH NIGHT (*Royal Court, Slo* 1745). John Shepherd as Malvolio, Kika Markham as Viola and Vickery Turner as Olivia in Jane Howell's production of Shakespeare's comedy. (To February 24.)

UPROAR IN THE HOUSE (*Whitehall, Whi* 6692). The plot concerns the desperate efforts of a sales manager to sell a modern undesirable residence. Leading parts are now played by Nicholas Parsons and Joan Sims. Transferred from the Garrick. Evs 7.30, Wed 2.30, Sat 5.30 and 8.30. Running time: 2½ hours.

VOLPONE (*National Theatre, Old Vic, 928* 7616). Tyrone Guthrie's second production for the company is Ben Jonson's rough, uproarious satire. Colin Blakely is cast as Volpone with Frank Wylie as Mosca and Robert Lang as Corvino. The designer is Tanya Moiseiwitsch. Evs 7.30, Mats 2.15. In repertory. Curtain: 10.47.

WHITE LIARS/BLACK COMEDY (*Lyric, Ger* 3686). Peter Shaffer has written a new one-act play to form a double-bill with his now famous *Black Comedy*. *White Liars* is set in a fortune-teller's booth at a seaside resort, with Dorothy Reynolds, James Bolam and Ian McKellen completing the cast. *Black Comedy* is played by these artists joined by Angela Scoular, Robert Fleming, Liz Fraser and Ken Wynn. (Opens February 21.)

## THRILLERS

ACCORDING TO THE EVIDENCE (*Savoy, Tem* 8888). A new thriller by Henry Cecil and Felicity Douglas, adapted from Henry Cecil's book. Douglas Wilmer plays a secret service agent with Muriel Pavlow as his wife, Naunton Wayne as an ex-colonel

turned gardener and Michael Gwynn as a professor of archaeology. Evs 8, Sat 5 and 8, Wed 2.30. Curtain: 10.20.

MOUSETRAP, THE (*Ambassadors, Tem* 1171). London's longest-running production, now in its 16th year. Evs 8, Tues 2.45, Sat 5. Curtain: 10.20.

WAIT UNTIL DARK (*Duchess, Tem* 8243). Frederick Knott's latest thriller, with Lana Morris now playing the blind heroine. Evs 8, Sat 5.30 and 8.30, Wed 3. Running time: 2½ hours.

## MUSICALS

THE BOY FRIEND (*Comedy, Whi* 2578). A revival of Sandy Wilson's twenties-style musical which ran for five years at Wyndham's from 1954. The author directs this new production which stars Cheryl Kennedy, Marion Grimaldi and Tony Adams. Evs 8.15, Wed 3, Sat 6 and 8.40. Running time: 2½ hours.

CABARET (*Palace, Ger* 6834). Judi Dench as Sally Bowles, Lila Kedrova as Fraulein Schneider and Peter Sallis as Herr Schultz in the American musical version of the John van Druten/Christopher Isherwood stories set in pre-war Berlin. Harold Prince directs. (Opens February 28.)

CHARLIE GIRL (*Adelphi, Tem* 7611). Anna Neagle in a comedy musical with book by Hugh and Margaret Williams. Joe Brown and Hy Hazell also star. Evs 7.30, Sat 5.30 and 8.30, Thurs 3. Curtain: 10.15.

THE DESERT SONG (*Cambridge, Tem* 6056). John Hanson plays the Red Shadow in this 1920's musical comedy. Evs 7.30, Wed 2.45, Sat 5.40 and 8.40. Running time: 2 hours 35 minutes.

FIDDLER ON THE ROOF (*Her Majesty's, Whi* 6606). Successful American musical, now in its third year on Broadway, co-starring the Israeli actor Topol and Miriam Karlin, who play a dairyman and his wife with their five dowerless daughters living in Czarist Russia. Directed and choreographed by Jerome Robbins. Evs 7.30, Wed and Sat 2.30. Curtain: 10.40. (Alfie Bass and Avis Bunnage play the two star rôles from February 19 onwards.)

THE FOUR MUSKETEERS! (*Drury Lane, Tem* 8108). Harry Secombe as D'Artagnan in a lavish new British comedy musical very loosely based on Dumas' novel. Peter Coe directs and Sean Kenny is the designer. Other lead rôles are played by Elizabeth Larner, Kenneth Connor, Aubrey Woods and Stephanie Voss. Evs 7.30, Wed, Sat 2.30. Curtain: 10.10.

SWEET CHARITY (*Prince of Wales, Whi* 8681). Juliet Prowse as a golden-hearted tart in an American musical hit which comes direct from an 18 months' run in New York. Also in the cast are Rod McLennan and Josephine Blake. Evs 8, Sat 5.30 and 8.45, Wed 3. Running time: 2½ hours.

YOU'RE A GOOD MAN, CHARLIE BROWN (*Fortune, Tem* 2238). A musical entertainment based on the famous American comic strip, *Peanuts*, by Charles M Schulz. The all-American cast is headed by David-Rhys Anderson as Charlie Brown. Music and lyrics are by Clark Gesner, book by John Gordon and the director is Joseph Hardy, who was responsible for all five American productions, including the one which has been playing to capacity houses for over a year off-Broadway.

## REVUES/VARIETY Etc.

BLACK AND WHITE MINSTREL SHOW, THE (*Victoria Palace, Vic* 1317). Evs 6.15 and 8.45. The record-breaking TV spectacular. Running time: 2 hours.

ROBINSON CRUSOE (*Palladium, Ger* 7373). Engelbert Humperdinck as Crusoe with Jimmy Logan and the TV comedians Hope and Keen. Daily 2.45 and 7.30. Curtain: 10.30.



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*Illustrated 35s*

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# playbills

CASTS AND CREDITS OF FIRST NIGHTS REVIEWED THIS MONTH

## All's Well That Ends Well

By William Shakespeare. Presented by the Royal Shakespeare Company at the Aldwych on January 17, 1968. Directed by John Barton, designed by Timothy O'Brien, music by Derek Oldfield, lighting by John Bradley. First seen during the 1967 Stratford season.

*Countess of Rousillon*, Catherine Lacey; *Bertram*, Ian Richardson; *Helena*, Lynn Farleigh; *Parolles*, Clive Swift; *King of France*, Sebastian Shaw; *Lord Lafew*, Brewster Mason; *Dumain the Elder*, Daniel Moynihan; *Dumain the Younger*, Phillip Hinton; *Rinaldo*, Hector Ross; *Lavache*, Ian Hogg; *Diana*, Helen Mirren; *Mariana*, Natalie Kent; *Widow*, Elizabeth Spriggs; *Duke of Florence*, David Ashford; *Morgan*, Patrick O'Connell; *Servant to Bertram*, Alton Kumalo; *1st Gentleman*, William Eedle; *2nd Gentleman*, Ted Valentine; *3rd Gentleman*, Terence Greenidge; *1st Suitor*, Colin McCormack; *2nd Suitor*, Matthew Robertson; *3rd Suitor*, James Vallon; *4th Suitor*, Dallas Adams; *Soldier*, Don Henderson; *Attendants and Soldiers*, Mike Billington, Ray Callaghan, Oscar James, David Kincaid, Chris Malcolm, Katherine Stark.

Reviewed by Peter Roberts, page 22  
Photographed by Zoe Dominic

## The Bells/Lend Me Five Shillings

*The Bells*, a melodrama by Leopold Lewis, followed by John Maddison Morton's one-act comedy, *Lend Me Five Shillings*. Presented by MGA Productions Ltd at the Vaudeville on January 24, 1968. Directed by Marius Goring, designed by Motley (*The Bells*) and Sheila Godbolt (*Lend Me Five Shillings*).

### THE BELLS

*Mathias*, Marius Goring; *Catherine*, Kathleen Michael; *Dr Zimmer*, Peter Forest; *Hans*, George Waring; *Annette*, Elizabeth Knight; *Father Walter*, Noel Johnson; *Sozel*, Marian Forster; *Christian*, David Munro; *Notary*, Tom Minnikin; *Mesmerist*, Gerald Tarrant; *Villagers, gendarmes, etc.*, Victoria Henderson, Tom Minnikin, Michael Reeves, Roberta Still, Nona Williams.

### LEND ME FIVE SHILLINGS

*Giorgioni*, Peter Forest; *Froggy Morland*, Gerald Tarrant; *Mrs Captain Phobbs*, Elizabeth Knight; *Mrs Major Phobbs*, Jennifer Wilson; *Captain Spruce*, David Munro; *Sam*, Noel Johnson; *The Hon Salina Shernought*, Kathleen Michael; *Woofy*, Marian Forster; *Mr Golightly*, Marius Goring; *Captain Phobbs*, George Waring.

Reviewed by Hugh Leonard, page 18  
Photographed by John Haynes

## The Last Analysis

By Saul Bellow. Presented at the Derby Playhouse on November 21, 1967. Directed by Peter C Jackson, designed by Richard Hammond. Lighting by Peter Bentley-Stephens.

*Philip Bumidge*, George Coulouris; *Winkleman*, Robert Macleod; *Bella*, Pauline Jefferson; *Madge*, Aileen Raymond; *Max*, Ian Cullen; *Aunt Velma*, Elaine Garreau; *Imogen*, Carolyn Moody; *Pamela*, Peggy Marshall; *Louis Mott*, Harry Beety; *Bertram*, Gerald Tarrant; *Galluppo*, Gareth Thomas; *Aufschnitt*, Edmund Bailey; *Fiddleman*, Barry Meteyard; *A Technician*, Adrian Nickisson; *A Messenger*, Ben Richardson.

Reviewed by Ian Watson, page 18

## Macbeth

By William Shakespeare. Presented by the Royal Shakespeare Company at the Aldwych on January 4, 1968. Directed by Peter Hall, designed by John Bury, costumes in collaboration with Ann Curtis, music by Guy Woolfenden and Unit Delta Plus Electronic Music, lighting by John Bradley, fights arranged by Donald Burton. Production first seen at Stratford-on-Avon in August, 1967.

*Macbeth*, Paul Scofield; *Lady Macbeth*, Vivien Merchant; *Duncan*, Sebastian Shaw; *Malcolm*, Ian Richardson; *Macduff*, Patrick O'Connell; *Lady Macduff*, Sheila Allen; *Banquo*, Brewster Mason; *The Weird Sisters*, Elizabeth Spriggs, Catherine Lacey, Clare Kelly; *Donalbain*, Colin McCormack; *A Sergeant*, Daniel Moynihan; *Ross*, Nicholas Selby; *Lennox*, John Bell; *Angus*, Ted Valentine; *Menteith*, David Weston; *Caithness*, William Eedle; *Fleance*, Michael Martin; *Seyton*, Ian Hogg; *A Porter*, Clive Swift; *An Old Man*, Jeffrey Dench; *An English Doctor*, Peter Rocca; *A Scottish Doctor*, Jeffrey Dench; *A Gentlewoman*, Heather Canning; *Siward*, Hector Ross; *Young Siward*, James Vallon; *1st Murderer*, Richard Moore; *2nd Murderer*, Peter Gordon; *A Lord*, Daniel Moynihan; *Macduff's son*, Peter Nobbs; *Messenger*, Don Henderson; *Servant*, Ray Callaghan; *Soldiers, servants, murderers, apparitions*: Dallas Adams, David Ashford, Mike Billington, Robert Davis, David Kincaid, Edward Lyon, Chris Malcolm, Gerald McNally, Matthew Robertson, Katherine Stark, James Vallon, Anna Volska.

Reviewed by Peter Roberts, page 20

## Tinker's Curse

By William Corlett. Presented by the Nottingham Playhouse on January 26, 1968. Directed by Donald McWhinnie, designed by John Elvery, lighting by Geoffrey Mersereau.

*Justin*, James O'Brien; *Lucy*, Vivien Heilbron; *Gibbon*, Bryan Pringle; *Dr Masterson*, David Allister.

Reviewed by Ronald Parr, page 22

## Twelfth Night

By William Shakespeare. Presented by Prospect Productions Limited at the Ashcroft, Croydon, on January 23, 1968. Directed by Toby Robertson, designed by Robin Archer, music composed by Benjamin Pearce Higgins, lighting by Tony Corbett.

*Viola*, Fiona Walker; *Sir Toby Belch*, Willoughby Goddard; *Sir Andrew Aguecheek*, Dinsdale Landen; *Maria*, Helen Fraser; *Feste*, Ronnie Stevens; *Sebastian*, Gary Bond; *Antonio*, David King; *Malvolio*, Bari Jonson; *Orsino*, Antony Webb; *A Sea Captain*, Giles Block; *Olivia*, Sheila Gish; *Fabian*, Gordon Reid; *Curio*, Richard Morant; *Valentine*, Drew Wood; *A Priest*, Drew Wood; *1st Officer*, Giles Block; *2nd Officer*, David Baron; *Flute Player*, Tony Reiss; *Guitar Player*, Adrian Harman; *Lords, sailors, officers and other attendants*, Pauline Dake, Ivor Goodman, Nicholas Pashley.

Reviewed by Peter Roberts, page 21  
Photographed by Michael Peto

## Volpone

By Ben Jonson. Presented by the National Theatre at the Old Vic on January 16, 1968. Directed by Tyrone Guthrie, designed by Tanya Moiseiwitsch, lighting by Robert Ornbo, music by Marc Wilkinson.

*Volpone*, Colin Blakely; *Mosca*, Frank Wylie; *Voltaire*, Edward Petherbridge; *Corbaccio*, Paul Curran; *Corvino*, Robert Lang; *Sir Politick Would-be*, Graham Crowden; *Lady Would-be*, Gabrielle Laye; *Celia*, Gillian Barge; *Nano*, Michael Tudor Barnes; *Androgyn*, Petronella Barker; *Castrone*, David Ryall; *Peregrine*, Benjamin Whitrow; *Bonario*, Peter Penry-Jones; *Clerk of the Court*, Reginald Green; *Judges*, Charles Kay, Peter Cellier, Lewis Jones, Lennard Pearce; *Court Officers, servants and citizens*: Alan Adams, David Belcher, Helen Bourne, Oliver Cotton, Margo Cunningham, Saam Dastoor, John Flint, Sandra Freeman, Mary Griffiths, Luke Hardy, William Hobbs, Roderick Horn, William Hoyland, Barry James, Nigel Lambert, Ian Pigot, Frederick Pyne, Malcolm Reynolds, Maggie Riley, Jeremy Rowe, Suzanne Vasey, Gary Waldhorn, Robert Walker.

Reviewed by Martin Esslin, page 14  
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EDITED BY PETER ROBERTS

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The publishers regret that owing to increased printing and paper costs it has been necessary to increase the price of the magazine by 6d. However, readers may extend, renew or enter a subscription at the old rates during the next 14 days (28 overseas). A reply-paid form giving details is on page 63.

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# cues

## NEW PLAYS AND CASTING

**Googie Withers** and her husband, John McCallum, will appear in *Relatively Speaking* in Australia next month. John McCallum will also direct the production.

**Tom Stoppard's** new play, now re-titled *Enter A Free Man*, opens in London in mid-March, starring Michael Hordern and Megs Jenkins.

**Paul Scofield** will play the name part in Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound* which Peter Brook is to direct for the RSC later this year. The American writer Robert Lowell has prepared a new version of the play.

**The Bristol Old Vic** programme for this season includes two important premieres. On April 3 comes Frank Marcus' new play, *Mrs Mouse, Are You Within?*, and on May 29 Robert Bolt's *Brother and Sister*, a revised version of an early work. Other productions scheduled for the spring include *Juno and the Paycock*, *Twelfth Night*, *The Seagull* and, at the Little Theatre, *A Day in the Death of Joe Egg* and *The Lady's Not for Burning*.

**Irene Worth** joins the National Theatre company on March 19 to play Jocasta in Seneca's *Oedipus* opposite John Gielgud in the title role. Peter Brook will direct the production. As far as it known, this will be the first production of the play in the English language; the version which the NT is using is by Ted Hughes from a translation by David Anthony Turner. Peter Brook will also design the production.

**Oh, Kay!** the George and Ira Gershwin/P G Wodehouse musical may be seen in London late this year. The revival is being staged by Zack Matalon as part of a scheme to present a repertory of musicals including *Meet Me In St Louis* and *The Fantasticks*. *Oh, Kay!* is planned to tour extensively in this country before opening in London.

**Max Adrian** will give three performances of his GBS one-man programme at the Queen Elizabeth Hall on April 15, 16 and 18. Later this year he will be appearing in a Disraeli programme.

**Brian Friel's** two short plays under the title *The Lovers* are to be produced on Broadway next month. Hilton Edwards will repeat his original production, seen last year in Dublin.

**The RSC** have announced six new productions for the 1968 Stratford season. It will open on April 3 with *Julius Caesar* directed by John Barton, with Ian Richardson as

Cassius, Brewster Mason as Caesar and Barrie Ingham as Brutus. Eric Porter will play the name part in *King Lear* directed by Trevor Nunn with Sheila Allen and Susan Fleetwood as Goneril and Regan, Sebastian Shaw as Gloucester and Norman Rodway as Edmund. Terry Hands (artistic director of Theatreground) directs *The Merry Wives of Windsor* with Brewster Mason as Falstaff and Ian Richardson as Ford, Elizabeth Spriggs as Mistress Ford and Brenda Bruce as Mistress Page. *Troilus and Cressida* will have Eric Porter as Ulysses, Michael Williams as Troilus, Helen Mirren as Cressida, Norman Rodway as Thersites and David Waller as Pandarus. John Barton is the director. Janet Suzman and Alan Howard play Beatrice and Benedick in Trevor Nunn's production of *Much Ado About Nothing*. David Jones' production of *As You Like It* is the only revival from last year; it has a new Rosalind in Janet Suzman (last year's Celia) with Michael Williams again playing Orlando. A non-Shakespeare play completes the programme—Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* directed by Clifford Williams, with Eric Porter as Faustus and Terrence Hardiman as Mephistophilis.

**Sheila Hancock** will appear in Brecht's *The Good Woman of Setzuan* at the Oxford Playhouse next month. Minos Volanakis will direct. In January she was responsible for the Playhouse production of *The Glass Menagerie*.

**Douglas Campbell** will play the lead in Paddy Chayefsky's new play *The Latent Heterosexual* which opens in Dallas, Texas, on March 12. Burgess Meredith will be guest director.

**The Queen's, Hornchurch**, will this month present the first repertory production of Peter Nichols' play *A Day in the Death of Joe Egg*. Thomas Middleton's *Women Beware Women* opens early in March, followed by Vera Caspary's and George Sklar's thriller, *Laura*.

**John Neville** is to return to the London stage next autumn when he leaves the Nottingham Playhouse. He will be seen in a new musical called *Mr and Mrs* with music and lyrics by John Taylor. The show is based on two Noël Coward plays, *Brief Encounter* and *Fumed Oak*.

**Boots with Strawberry Jam** is the title of the new Johnny Dankworth/Benny Green musical play about the life and loves of Bernard Shaw, which Nottingham Playhouse present on February 28. John

Neville will play Shaw with Cleo Laine in the dual roles of Ellen Terry and Mrs Patrick Campbell.

**David William** directs the OUDS production of *Hamlet* at the Oxford Playhouse on February 13. Hamlet will be played by Richard Heffer. David William was himself a former OUDS Hamlet—in 1952, immediately before making his first professional appearance with the Old Vic.

**Jack Sheppard**, the notorious highwayman, is the subject of Ken Campbell's new play which receives its first performance at the Octagon, Bolton, on April 2.

**Keith Michell** is to play Don Quixote in the forthcoming London production of the American musical, *Man of La Mancha*, based on the Cervantes story.

**June Bronhill** will star in a revival of Ivor Novello's *The Dancing Years* to be presented by Tom Arnold in London later this year.

**Frankie Howerd** appears at the Belgrade, Coventry, on February 27 in *The Wind in the Sassafras Trees*, an 'indoor English Western' by Ray Galton and Alan Simpson.

**Ian Carmichael** and Anne Rogers will co-star in *I Do! I Do!* the American musical based on Jan de Hartog's play, *The Four Poster*. It will open in London in May.

**The National Theatre** will present a new play later this year based on Beatle John Lennon's two books, *In His Own Write* and *A Spaniard in the Works*. Adapted by the author and Adrienne Kennedy, it will be called *Act 1, Scene 3*. The play had a Sunday night performance at the Old Vic last year, directed by Victor Spinetti, who will also be responsible for this revised production which will have decor by Tony Walton.

**Angela Pleasence**, daughter of Donald Pleasence, will make her first appearance on the London stage when *The Ha Ha* opens at the Hampstead Theatre Club this summer, followed, it is hoped, by a West End run. *The Ha Ha*, Richard Eyre's adaptation of the novel by Jennifer Dawson, was seen last year at the Royal Lyceum, Edinburgh, when Angela Pleasence's performance as a young mental patient made a deep impression.

**John Osborne's** two new full-length plays, *The Hotel in Amsterdam* and *Time Present*, will be seen at the Royal Court in the summer.



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*Mark Antony* Charles Thomas  
*Casca* Derek Smith  
*Portia* Elizabeth Spriggs  
*Octavius* Geoffrey Hutchings

### KING LEAR

Directed by Trevor Nunn  
Designer Christopher Morley  
Music Guy Woolfenden

*Lear* Eric Porter  
*Gloucester* Sebastian Shaw  
*Kent* David Waller  
*Edgar* Alan Howard  
*Edmund* Norman Rodway  
*Fool* Michael Williams  
*Albany* Terrence Hardiman  
*Cornwall* Patrick Stewart  
*Goneril* Sheila Allen  
*Regan* Susan Fleetwood  
*Cordelia* Diane Fletcher

Opening 10 April

### THE MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR

Directed by Terry Hands  
Designer Timothy O'Brien  
Music Guy Woolfenden

*Falstaff* Brewster Mason  
*Mistress Page* Brenda Bruce  
*Mistress Ford* Elizabeth Spriggs  
*Mistress Quickly* Lila Kaye  
*Ford* Ian Richardson  
*Page* Jeffery Dench  
*Evans* Emrys James  
*Caius* Derek Smith  
*Slender* Peter Geddis  
*Shallow* Sydney Bromley  
*Host* David Healy  
*Fenton* Roger Rees  
*Pistol* Morgan Sheppard

Opening 2 May

### AS YOU LIKE IT

Directed by David Jones  
Designer Timothy O'Brien  
Music William Mathias

*Rosalind* Janet Suzman  
*Orlando* Michael Williams  
*Celia* Rowena Cooper  
*Oliver* Bernard Lloyd  
*Touchstone* Patrick Stewart  
*Le Beau* Richard Simpson  
*Duke Frederick* Clifford Rose  
*Banished Duke* Terrence Hardiman  
*Jaques* Alan Howard  
*Corin* Richard Moore  
*Silvius* Bruce Myers  
*Phebe* June Watts  
*Adam* George Cormack  
*Audrey* Susan Fleetwood

Opening 16 May

### TROILUS AND CRESSIDA

Directed by John Barton  
Designer Timothy O'Brien  
Music Guy Woolfenden

*Troilus* Michael Williams  
*Cressida* Helen Mirren  
*Hector* Patrick Stewart  
*Pandarus* David Waller  
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### MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING

Directed by Trevor Nunn  
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# FIRST NIGHTS

*Elizabeth Sellars and Jane Wenham in The Italian Girl, at Wyndham's*

**After the Christmas rush and before the February avalanche of openings, January was almost an eventless month in the London theatre. Only Tyrone Guthrie's new production of Volpone at the Old Vic and Marius Goring's gallant effort to resuscitate The Bells kept it from being a non-starter.**

*Plays reviewed this month:*

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The Bells/Lend me Five Shillings, page 18

Macbeth, page 20

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Twelfth Night, page 21

All's Well That Ends Well, page 22

Tinker's Curse, page 22









# OF CORPSES AND SATYRS

MARTIN ESSLIN reviews *Volpone* / *Old Vic*

In 1619 Ben Jonson told his Scottish friend, Drummond of Hawthornden, that he had 'consumed a whole night in lying looking to his great toe, about which he hath seen Tartars and Turks, Romans and Carthaginians, fight in his imagination'. One can well believe it. Shakespeare's chief rival among the Elizabethan playwrights was a man of truly prodigious imagination. Where Shakespeare had to take his plots from earlier plays or collections of Italian *novelle*, Jonson invented for his comedies characters and intrigues that were all his own. Thus he combined immense learning with a prodigious gift of fantasy and inventiveness. He may have lacked the depth of feeling and the human intensity of Shakespeare in his great tragedies. But he was in many ways far more *intelligent* than Shakespeare, let alone more intellectual. And he could rise to poetic heights of his own, as in the magic lines of *Volpone*'s attempt to seduce Celia—

Thy baths shall be the juice of gilly-flowers,  
Spirit of roses, and of violets,  
The milk of unicorns, and panthers' breath  
Gathered in bags, and mixed with Cretan wines.  
Our drink shall be prepared gold and amber,  
Which we will take until my roof whirl round  
With the vertigo; and my dwarf shall dance,  
My eunuch sing, my fool make up the antic.  
Whilst we, in changed shapes, act Ovid's tales . . .

It is one of the hoarier clichés of our dramatic reviewers that Sir Tyrone Guthrie overloads his productions with tricks and gimmickry while neglecting the poetry. Nothing could be further from the truth. Had *Volpone* spoken the tremendous lines of this incantation as a purple passage, an aria to be savoured, he would have

killed not only the dramatic situation from which they spring, he would *also* have devalued the force of the poetry as poetry, as dramatic poetry. Colin Blakely, under Sir Tyrone's direction, came upon these lines in the course of a horrifyingly realistic, terrifyingly suspenseful scene of rape and seduction; he was chasing his victim around the room, a grotesque figure in a nightshirt, a man whom the lady had believed to be on his deathbed suddenly come to menacing life, a corpse turned satyr. The sudden realisation that this sex-mad lemur, this King Kong attacking a virgin, was in fact panting out the most exquisite poetry, that his lust and lechery had become the compost from which the tender flowers of lyrical ecstasy could spring, this realisation not only enhanced the poetry, it became the very essence of the true magic of drama.

*Volpone* is an Aesopian fable about the fox who is trapped by his own cunning. Sir Tyrone Guthrie rightly emphasises this fact by putting fox and fly, vulture and raven, crow and parrot into the appropriate grotesque animal masks, with huge beak-like noses, and feathery cloaks.

Jules Romain and Stefan Zweig, who turned *Volpone* into a big success in Germany and France in the thirties, went even further—the whole hog in fact. They made the pure-minded wife, whom the crow is willing to sacrifice to his greed, into a dove, Colomba, and the fiery young knight who rescues her into Leone, the lion. But by streamlining the play, by eliminating the wild sub-plot about the featherbrained Englishman Sir Politick Would-Be and his even more feathery wife, by confining it to interiors and shedding the gloriously anarchic street-scenes, these latter-day adaptors also diminished *Volpone* and proved the superiority of Jonson's sprawling, teeming, less logical but all the more vital structure which reminds one of the Englishness of an engraving by Hogarth, or, better still, a cartoon by Gillray. It is this true charac-



Above left: Colin Blakely as *Volpone*. Right: Gabrielle Laye as *Lady Politick Would-Be*. Below left: *Volpone* watches as Mosca (Frank Wylie) receives an offering to his master from Corbaccio (Paul Curran). Right: the seduction scene—Gillian Barge as *Celia*









ter of Ben Jonson's work which Sir Tyrone Guthrie and his designer, Tanya Moiseiwitsch have brilliantly brought out.

These grotesque animal figures are, of course, veritable feasts for actors. Edward Petherbridge (Voltore), Paul Curran (Corbaccio) and Robert Lang (Corvino) seize the opportunities proffered them to the fullest effect. It is difficult to say who comes out best. These are three fully satisfying portraits. Frank Wylie, in the second lead as Mosca, the fly, has a far straighter, and therefore far more exacting part, which he carries through with admirable discretion and wit. Colin Blakely may lack the aristocratic side of Volpone, but he has his strength, his cunning, his gusto.

Graham Crowden and Gabrielle Laye as Sir Politick and his wife acquit themselves equally well in the most difficult parts in the play; for the sub-plot, being only loosely related to the main action, can only be made acceptable if the largely redundant characters become, in themselves, objects of fascination and delight. In Jonson's own time, these characters were *topical* satire; today they could easily be dead weights. Graham Crowden and Gabrielle Laye, however, succeed in creating such telling portraits of upper-class boobies that they actually achieve the incredible feat of *retaining* the element of contemporary satire even for our own time!

Gillian Barge, as the image of wronged wifely innocence, Celia, looks very beautiful, but is, to my taste, slightly too loud, slightly too robust in her protestations. Peter Penry-Jones makes her rescuer very credible as both noble and stupid.

The extremely important parts of the four judges are in Sir Tyrone Guthrie's interpretation no more than incarnations of senile imbecility. This works in the scene in which they are deceived by Volpone's manoeuvres, it works less well in the final scene when they dispense justice seasoned with wisdom. True enough, as in *Tartuffe*, as in the *Threepenny Opera*, the triumph of virtue can there too be seen as an irony. Yet *these* judges have behaved so stupidly, that the sudden reversal becomes very hard to take.

But these are points of detail. What matters is that our National Theatre has enriched its repertoire by a worthy performance of one of the greatest of our national playwrights.

*Above left: Volpone simulates a death-like paralysis when he is brought before the Court. Right: Mosca triumphant, with the keys to his master's fortune. Below left: Celia tearfully resists Volpone's advances. Right: Graham Crowden as Sir Politick Would-Be*

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# a pterodactyl in flight

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HUGH LEONARD reviews *The Bells/Vaudeville*

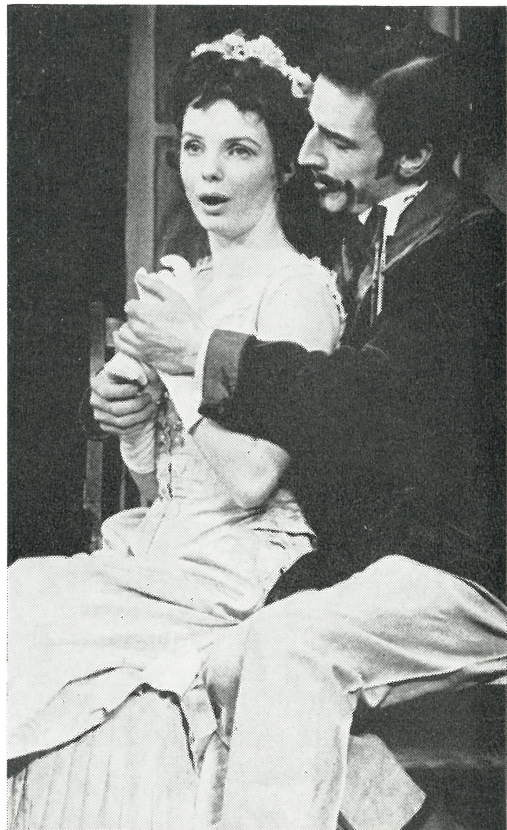
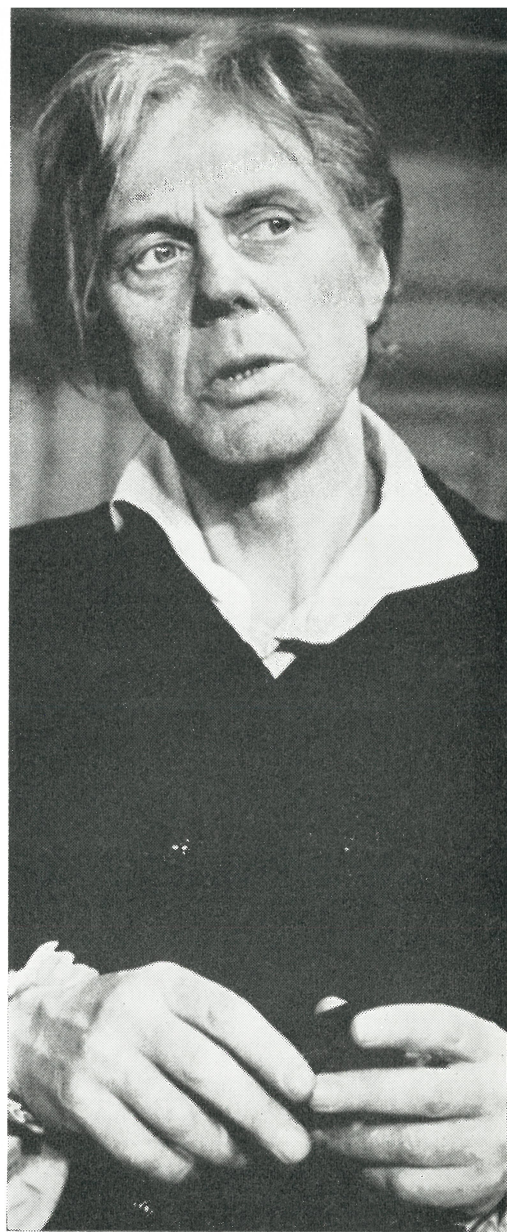
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Ten years ago in Dublin, at the first night of a play written by myself, I encountered an army officer coming out of the stalls too during the interval. Recognising me only as a fellow sufferer, he desisted from adjusting his cavalry twill for long enough to breathe fervently and agonisedly: 'Jasus . . . Jay-sus!' It will forever remain the most succinctly expressive piece of drama criticism of all time, as far as I am concerned; and, dispiriting though the experience was, it turned me into an indefatigable collector of *mots* uttered during theatre intervals. The cream of the collection is perhaps too libellous to relate; so let me pass on to a not unworthy candidate for inclusion, uttered only a few short hours ago during Marius Goring's revival of *The Bells*. A girl hell-bound for the circle bar of the Vaudeville Theatre was heard to remark excitedly to her companion—this was after the second act—'I wonder who did the murder?'

This was probably a rather back-handed compliment to Mr Goring who, over two acts, had been hearing an accusing apparition of a murdered Polish Jew behind a gauze backdrop, had fainted twice and dropped the fire-irons once . . . all in as fine a show of guilt-obsession since Henry Irving stormed barns and ate up the scenery. But if Mr Goring's hard work seemed to have gone for

naught, the remark was at least a tribute to the Victorian narrative-power of the play. It is never less than absurdly melodramatic, and never more than a museum-piece (although I for one will remain grateful to Mr Goring for playing it in deadly earnest and showing us this dramatic pterodactyl in flight just as—one imagines—our ancestors saw it); but for all its farouche excesses, it is at times a piece of story-telling which borders on the compulsive. Only in its final moments, in fact, when the tormented Mathias drops dead rather inexplicably as the result of a bad dream, does the play really skid out of control. (And why did Mr Goring cut the last 'Dead!', which should have been uttered by Kathleen Michael? I am sure that some members of the audience went home under the impression that he had merely brought off a kind of hat-trick in fainting.) How many subsequent playwrights and film scenarists have not plagiarised the main premise of *The Bells*?—a murderer's daughter falls in love with and marries a policeman. In fact, if you were to clothe the supporting characters in flesh and blood and give them their collective head, you might end up by writing a pretty good play and changing your name to Arthur Miller.

It is a short play, mainly because—having delivered themselves of the







exposition—the subsidiary characters have hardly anything to say. Even the part of Mathias is on the skimpy side for the first two acts, during which he must slake his fires with growls and glowerings. While waiting for Mr Goring to get a head of steam on, one might liken him to a wine taster who has taken the pledge—he circles the part without ever really coming to grips with it. It would be nice to report that in the full monologic fury of the third act he throws restraint to the winds, but what Henry Irving could get away with in 1871, no modern actor can hope to do. The long description of the murder is written as a *tour-de-force*; to play it with the stops out these days would be to invite derision, while to enact it at less than full strength would be to deprive the play of its only *raison d'être*: a blood-curdling climax. Our values have turned inside out: we can happily endure, if not enjoy, the long warm-up to the third act, but what was once the play's 'big' scene is now virtually unactable. Ham, like other meats, turns rancid with age. Mr Goring, although caught in a cleft stick, has a gallant try: his reconstruction of the murder is beautifully done. It is our reflexes—conditioned by ninety years of naturalism—and not any limitations on his part, which oblige him to come in at less than full power. To say that one was never bored is not to damn with faint praise; rather, it is to acknowledge a considerable achievement on Mr Goring's part. There were a few first-night gremlins, but nothing which could account for the awfulness of the sets—by Motley, surprisingly. The inn interior was repulsively ugly,

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Above left: Marus Goring as Mathias. Right: Mathias with his wife, Catherine (Kathleen Michael). Below right: Elizabeth Knight as their daughter, Annette, with her fiance, Christian (David Munro), quartermaster of the Gendarmerie. Below left: Elizabeth Knight and Gerald Tarrant in *Lend Me Five Shillings*, the one-act farce presented with *The Bells*

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# FIRST NIGHTS

## Macbeth

Aldwych

Reviewer Peter Roberts

Prior commitments and other complex matters that we can only guess at must be behind the decision to bring in from Stratford-on-Avon Peter Hall's warily received *Macbeth* rather than Karolos Koun's

universally admired *Romeo and Juliet*. At least, apparently Russia liked Scofield's *Macbeth* a good deal more than many Stratford-on-Avon first nighters. But I cannot report on intervening developments in the reading as the actor was struck down by flu on the second night of the London opening and Ian Hogg was called in at short notice to deputise for him.

The smoothness with which Mr Hogg did this says a lot for his nerve and probably as much for the frequency and thoroughness of the Royal Shakespeare Company's understudy rehearsals. Hogg is obviously an actor of intelligence whose reading is no smudged copy of the indisposed star's. He pitches his performance low and the first thing one notices is how his *Macbeth* blinks uncertainly in the bright lights of the castle tapers. He waves an exquisite hand that one feels to be beautifully manicured without needing to take a closer look at the finger nails. The actor also wiggles his hips and shoulders a good deal (an incipient mannerism?) that suggests a voluptuary caught up in barbaric action for which he is no match. An interesting reading, then, from an intelligent performer that is more remarkable in the circumstances for the unhurried precision of its execution than for its excitement or stature.

Though she contributed a beautifully calculated sleep walking scene, Vivien Merchant as Lady *Macbeth* was not, I thought, in quite such good form as at Stratford. Maybe she was a little thrown at finding herself paired off with a new husband at such short notice. But at any rate hers is a reading that avoids the throaty melodramatics of the recent Chichester production and the unintelligibility of the more recent Royal Court revival. Brewster Mason's bluff, officer-class acting personality gives Banquo an immediate and a real identity. In the same context I would mention Heather Canning's Gentlewoman who breathes instant life into what is usually a costumed super called upon to be a faceless witness of Lady *Macbeth*'s somnambulism. Clive Swift's Porter is the least impressive I have seen, though we must beware of attributing failure to the actor when the director may have decided to play down a scene that is too often milked for easy laughs.

Ian Richardson's chalk-faced Malcolm has gained both in detail and in effectiveness since I saw it at Stratford. He has the full sized voice of the classical actor, which is rare in actors of his generation, and uses it with a suppleness and sensitivity that is rarer still. On the second night he made as much of the English scene as Sebastian Shaw so miraculously made of the few acting crumbs Shakespeare tosses to Duncan.

Peter Hall's production is now faster and crisper and is appropriately cinematic in its swift cross-cutting. The elaborateness of the opening scene with projected silhouettes of the Weird Sisters and the lava-like bubbling of the stage floor do, however, still raise expectations of a more virtuoso staging than in fact is subsequently offered.

But what may be lost in virtuosity is gained in speed and clarity. And they are cheap at the price.

## The Last Analysis

Derby Playhouse

Reviewer Ian Watson

It would be convenient if we could dismiss Saul Bellow as a respected novelist doodling in theatre. Alas, not possible. The one-acters seen in London a year or two ago testified to a real, if not particularly thrilling, theatrical imagination at work. Admittedly, *The Last Analysis* is an earlier work; but since we are given to understand that he has rewritten it since it flopped in the States, we can only hold him responsible for its resurrection at Derby, and charge him, if not with a skinny and inept piece of dramatic writing, at least with pathetic misjudgment.

A vaudeville comic, put out of business by sophistication (enter one tirade against modern tastes in comedy: 'extermination's a riot, sadism's fun'), Philip Bummidge attempts a comeback, before a closed-circuit audience of psychiatrists, with his homespun psychotherapy. He sits on his potty, plays with a toy car, re-enacts his 10-year-old self stealing his sister's underwear; and in the last analysis of the title—as tedious a piece of fancy-dress pageantry as the Miss World contest, without even the legs—he re-enacts his own birth. The process leads him (curtain line coming up) to 'THE SUBLIME! The hangers-on, who in former days dragged him down to affluence, are dismissed and Bummidge dedicates himself to a comic art 'based on the latest psychological knowledge'.

As farce, the play is inadequately set up and rarely followed through. Bummidge's whore is at one moment scuttled into a closet to avoid confrontation with his wife; interest is revived when, after a minute or two, she is provided with an umbrella as protection against a leaking roof; and ten minutes later, still in the wife's presence, she wanders aimlessly back on set—simple comic situation collapses with all the panache of a bursting egg yolk.

George Coulouris, the latest of Derby's star imports, was at best grossly miscast as the ex-vaudevillian. His appreciation of gag-timing was stunning by its absence, and with his constant whining complaint, he resembled nothing so much as a hen-pecked suburban bank clerk. And the rest of Peter C Jackson's production limped sadly along behind him, in a flashy box-set which completely belied the programme description of 'a two-storey loft in a warehouse'.

In the midst of such a totally depressing

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spectacle, I'm very grateful to Gerald Tarrant for giving me a performance to praise. As Bummidge's ex-ratcatcher sidekick, he displayed a comic inventiveness worthy of Groucho Marx, whether exciting on a double-talk or delivering a spiel to camera while peering at point-blank range down its lens.

## Twelfth Night

Ashcroft, Croydon

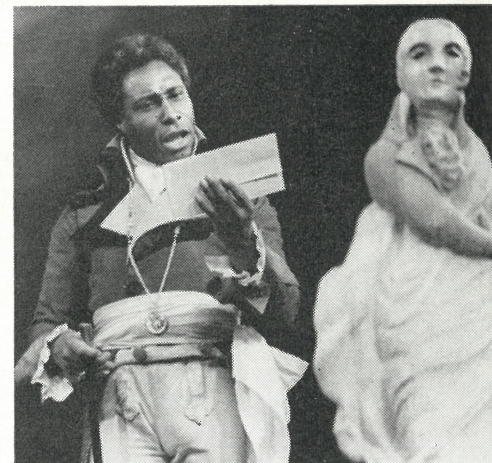
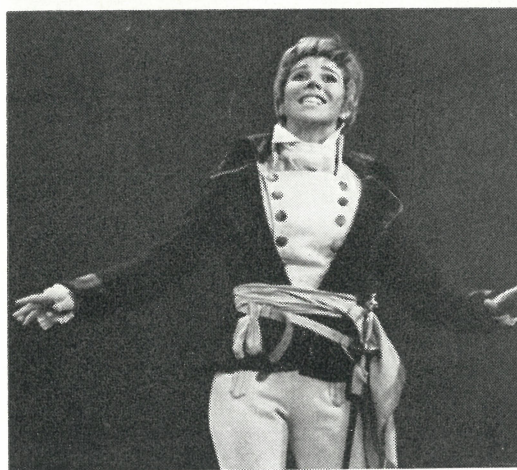
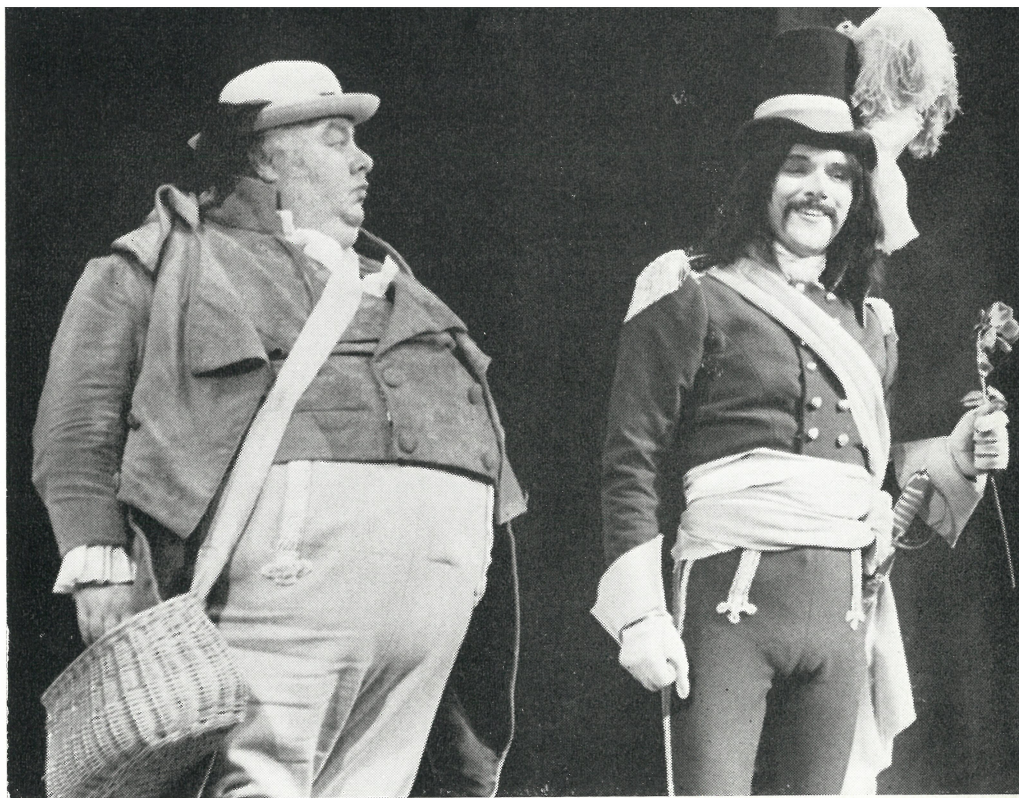
Reviewer Peter Roberts

**A**sour appraisal of an unsatisfactory evening had better open with a laudatory preface. Prospect Productions is a roving repertory company that tours Britain with a repertoire of classics and occasional new plays of merit. As such it fills an enormous gap left by the disappearance of companies like Donald Wolfitt's. And, since Prospect is a subsidised troupe, it can fill that gap with an overall quality presentation that would no longer be feasible for the actor manager operating on a commercial basis. So well in fact has Prospect done its job in the provinces that it has even managed to penetrate that most parochial of sectors, London's West End, with productions like *The Constant Couple*, *Howards End* and *The Cherry Orchard*.

Toby Robertson's production of *Twelfth Night* which began an eight-week tour at the Croydon Ashcroft is obviously designed to fit a multiplicity of stages. But the honour of such intentions must not allow the reviewer to overlook the lack of its achievements. The Illyria here is located in the philistine environment of the English countryside where the gentry shoot, hunt, fish and carouse whilst Napoleon dominates the rest of Europe. In other words, Shakespeare is updated to the period of John Whiting's *Penny For a Song* which, though it suits Toby Belch's revels, ill-accommodates the androgynous passions of the lovers and the melancholy fooling of the clowns.

Apart from a backdrop that can be illuminated to suggest a dawn, high noon and sunset, there is virtually no setting. There are, however, some mammoth props—a Constable-like hay wain, a life-size horse, some country-house statuary and a beer wagon. The result is that either the stage is bare and the cast lined up like a football team or else they are distributed in, on or around the props. Fabian loads the hay wain, Orsino sits astride the horse, Malvolio is overheard from the empty pedestals of the statues and Olivia's steward is eventually incarcerated in the beer barrel. On the whole, the props are imaginatively used—although it would take a Zeffirelli to properly incorporate the 'living' statues into the spirit of the production.

The choice of period and means of pre-



Three scenes from Prospectus Productions' *Twelfth Night*: Willoughby Goddard and Dinsdale Landen (top) as Sir Toby and Sir Andrew; Fiona Walker (below left) as Viola and Bari Jonson (right) as Malvolio

senting it need not so have undermined the play had the casting been happier. Now we all know that vicious circle whereby coloured actors in this country never land any decent parts because they never are given the experience that would enable them to hook them. I therefore, of course, applaud Toby Robertson's attempt to break this circle by giving Malvolio to the Jamaican actor, Bari Jonson. But at the same time honestly compels me to deplore the results. It takes the actor all his time to jerk out the lines so that he is quite unable to point them, much less to attend to details of characterisation. Not since Simone Signoret essayed Lady Macbeth has there been a more unfortunate Shakespeare debut.

Less unfortunate, but not much, is the Toby Belch of Willoughby Goddard, an

actor who must have the biggest paunch in show business. Needless to say, his Sir Toby (looking like a cross between John Bull and Bacchus), makes an immensely promising visual impact. But the verse is merely bellowed and the shabby, sad side of the character remains unexplored. The Olivia is lightweight, the Orsino and Aguecheek dull and the Maria much given to shrill giggles and a little-girl toe-hopping in moments of excitement that become tiresome because so frequent. It's nice, therefore, to be able to pass on to the really excellent Viola of Fiona Walker, whose reading remains unimpaired by the poor support it is given. She touches the heart of the play and does it with an economy and precision that are quite admirable. Ronnie Stevens' down-at-heel Feste, after a stunned beginning, eventu-





Lynn Farleigh as Helena and Catherine Lacey as the Countess in *The RSC's All's Well That Ends Well*, now at the Aldwych

them, except involuntarily by his sudden death after a fall. Just what the lesson is never emerges, partly because even the death is as gentle and tidy as that of a babe in a Barrie wood.

Our last hope is the hastily-summoned doctor, whose job is to call the truants back to the world of telegrams and anger. But all this half-character can do is to bark out a few warnings and commands.

The pity of it all is that Mr Corlett has a lot more talent than I fear this notice suggests. But although he is only thirty, here he seems to be addressing playgoers who by now must be well into their seventies. At Nottingham Playhouse he is served as well as may be by Donald McWhinnie, who directs on an attractive setting by John Elvery, and by James O'Brien and Vivien Heilbron as the youngsters. Understandably, Bryan Pringle seemed uncertain what to make of the tramp.

## ***All's Well That Ends Well***

**Aldwych**

Reviewer Peter Roberts

Oh dear, how very difficult it is to write sensibly about a production that leaves one all tangled up in superlatives and exclamatives! So perfect a job has John Barton made of this *All's Well That Ends Well*, I find a strong attack of gush coming on—which is all very lovely I suppose for those involved but which won't impress the sceptical or be of much use to those who want to know what's good about it and why they should take the trouble to see what is, with some reason, one of Shakespeare's less popular romances.

Effusiveness apart, then, here are a few reasons why I would recommend taking advantage of the RSC's decision to bring in this summer offering in Stratford for a London winter showing.

First, please note how John Barton gets his effects without performing directorial pirouettes across the text. This is a production that truly illuminates a difficult work instead of using it as raw material for the director to say 'Look what a clever boy I am'.

A simple Palladian façade forms the basic set which is transformed into the three principle locations of the drama by a rearrangement of its colour scheme. Rousillon is clearly identified by autumn shades of yellow and brown, the French court in Paris by deep blue and the military encampment in Florence by bright, toy-soldier red. Besides offering a means of

to page 65

ally also ended up on this Viola's wavelength.

In its depth and delicacy of feeling and in the formal counterpoint of its construction *Twelfth Night* has always struck me as the most Mozartian of Shakespeare's comedies. For me the trouble with this production is that it treats the play as literary Offenbach.

## ***Tinker's Curse***

**Nottingham Playhouse**

Reviewer Ronald Parr

After plays like *The Gentle Avalanche* and *The Scouring of Matthew Barrow*, William Corlett's latest piece is frankly disappointing. These days he seems to be

writing with one eye for the television screen and one for the stage. *Tinker's Curse*, a fragile three-and-a-half character piece which runs for less than a hundred long minutes, suggests a television script gone astray. It needs, among other things, the visual comments which only the camera can give.

At a ruined folly in a National Trust Park two teenagers arrive for their first illicit weekend. They are nice youngsters—the feeble adjective describes them all too completely—from old-fashioned schools and over-sheltered homes. During some prolonged and rather obvious comedy they betray little except their inexperience.

None too soon, at least from our point of view, this flawed idyll is shattered by the arrival of a tramp claiming the rights of a peripatetic squatter. Had he turned out to be a realist the situation might have been saved. But fatally for the play he is a whimsical old fellow with little to teach



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# SUTHERLAND, SOPHOCLES AND SHAKESPEARE

PETER ROBERTS reviews new theatre records

**A**s the optimism of its title suggests, *Love Live Forever* (Decca SET 349/50 81s) affords a glimpse of romance from the point of view of operetta and musical comedy. On the turntable it comes across, in fact, as a marathon edition of the BBC's *Grand Hotel* with Richard Bonyngue conducting the Palm Court Orchestra and with Joan Sutherland doubling up as Ann Zeigler and Webster Booth. Since there are no orchestral or instrumental interludes and since the album takes four sides and practically two hours to span its 23 items, this arrangement seems on the whole to have been unwise. You can have too much of a good thing. Even of Joan Sutherland.

After Bellini, Donizetti and Meyerbeer, Miss Sutherland must find the technical demands of Rodgers, Romberg, Kern and Kreisler as easy as falling off a log. And indeed to have a voice of such technical resources lavished on such material does seem as extravagant as relaunching the Queen Mary to cross the Woolwich Ferry. And yet, and in spite of the technical ease with which the Sutherland sound sails through the mounting numbers of almost unalloyed rapture, the constant repetition of the same rather elegiac voice without

any Tauberish Romeo to coo back does produce diminishing returns.

A comparison with Elisabeth Schwarzkopf, who undertook a similar recital on record a few years ago, is instructive. Although Miss Schwarzkopf also managed without a man, she wisely restricted herself to one record. And where the two prima donnas duplicate themselves (*Im Chambre séparée*, the Nuns' Chorus) comparisons are more revealing. Quite apart from the fact that Schwarzkopf's German and French are better, the latter also brings a much greater variety of colouring to the different numbers and, into the bargain, is able to call upon a seductive, Viennese-type allure that is difficult to resist in so appropriate a setting.

However, the Sutherland album is banded and there is no need to risk monotony by playing the whole thing each time it is brought out. As an album it is likely to make an especial appeal to theatregoers with long memories, for it presents a loving panorama of the days when 'musical comedies' had not become just 'musicals' and still kept something of their links with operetta. A really handsome, 32-page brochure (dedicated to Gladys Moncrieff of *The Maid of the Mountains*

fame) accompanies the album. It proves to be a sort of pocket encyclopaedia of the field with introductory notes by Ronald Hill which manage to convey the essential data about the composer, original performance and performers as well as revivals—all in a readable way. And as you listen to Sutherland launching into *The Student Prince*, *The Desert Song*, *Music in the Air*, *Rose Marie*, *The Maid of the Mountains* and *Love Live Forever* you can take a look at production pictures of original performances with photos of Ilse Marvenga, Edith Day, Mary Ellis, Jose Collins and Evelyn Laye.

It is a very great leap from this world to Sophocles and Shakespeare but the jump will have to be made for the other two albums out this month are of *Antigone* (Caedmon TRS-320 76s) and *Richard III* (Caedmon SRS 223 190s). Both are in stereo, both are directed by Howard Sackler and both have prestigious cast lists made up of English players with trans-atlantic reputations.

With the Sophocles tragedy in the hands of Dorothy Tutin (Antigone), Max Adrian (Creon), Eileen Atkins (Ismene), Jeremy Brett (Haimon), and June Jago (Eurydice), Howard Sackler seems to have decided



to give his experienced cast its head. The result is that style ranges from the empty, pulpit rhetoric of Geoffrey Dunn's Teiresias to the edgy naturalism of Thomas Kempinski's Guard, which certainly better suits Dudley Fitts' unaggressively modern translation. The production uses stereo for intelligent but unobtrusive distancing of the characters and there is a discreet use of musical effects from a wide assortment of instruments to whip up the proceedings from time to time. This arrangement works well and I am only a little uneasy at one point about the use of maracas in this context.

Although Max Adrian's part of Creon does not constitute the title-rôle of this extraordinarily compact tragedy his is certainly the principal character. And he brings to it all his technical wizardry that takes full advantage of the intimacy of microphone acting. This tetchy, stubborn, suspicious and finally humiliated Creon is amongst the finest things this fine actor has given us. Dorothy Tutin's Antigone is perhaps sometimes not so perfectly gauged a performance for the microphone but hers is a deeply felt and unpriggish performance which has excellent support from Eileen Atkins as her bewildered sister, Ismene. Jeremy Brett's Haimon is a beautifully spoken performance at its best when the man is patiently trying to get his father to see reason: persistence, patience and tact are here finally integrated.

When you see the names of Ian Holm and Peggy Ashcroft on the box cover of the *Richard III*, the natural expectation is a recorded version of the final instalment of the Royal Shakespeare Company's *Wars of the Roses*. However, it is enough to play the first side of this five-record set to discover that Howard Sackler's production is not simply a take-over of Peter Hall's. Peggy Ashcroft's ravaged Queen Margaret remains intact—even with the soft French 'r's' she gives it at Stratford-on-Avon. But the Richard III on this album is recruited from the rival national ensemble and is in fact Robert Stephens. Ian Holm is thereby given the opportunity to switch from playing the baddie to the goodie of the piece and in so doing makes a nice incisive job of Richmond, saviour of the Tudor monarchy.

Recorded performances provide a convenient but not always reliable trailer of possible stage work—for example, Paul Scofield's Macbeth on radio did not quite live up to its promise on stage. Even so, I wouldn't mind betting on the strength of this recording that Robert Stephens would make a most exciting Richard Crookback in the theatre. His has never been a beautiful voice and his delivery lacks an incisiveness that made him less than an ideal Benedick. But these very deficiencies are an advantage in Richard III and he turns them to good use. He does not essay the self-congratulating villainy that Olivier stamped the part with, but his is an infinitely devious Crookback whose craftiness is matched only by the cold cunning of Cyril Cusack's Bucking-

ham on this recording.

Glenda Jackson is splendid and waspishly vituperative as Anne, and she and Stephens makes a great thing of the frequently embarrassing scene of the wooing of Anne. Jeremy Brett is well cast as Clarence and brings the same qualities of clarity and supple speaking that he brought to the *Antigone* album. It is tiresome and soon becomes meaningless to throw bouquets at every member of the cast, but Paul Curran's world-weary and soul-sick Edward IV must receive a special salute.

Howard Sackler's recorded production is excellent. The play, uncut, is got on to five records at the cost of an occasional turn in mid-scene. Scene division is marked by a hollow and resounding click which is a hundred times more effective than such a description makes it sound. The resources of stereo are again used

intelligently—for instance, in Buckingham's elaborately staged public relations job on behalf of Richard's promotion to the throne we hear Robert Stephens up aloft with his prayer book and the monks whilst the citizens of London plead below. Echo chambers are used for the ghost parade on the eve of the battle of Bosworth and together with an eerie mumbled background the device is remarkably evocative of cavernous churches and musty tombs. I would suggest only that the crowd scenes might be more dynamically recorded and that it might be effective to hear an occasional footfall and the opening and closing of an occasional door or gate. Although these Shakespeare recordings go in large numbers to schools who are primarily concerned with the texts, I don't see that students are going to miss anything by hearing a thoroughly dramatic representation of them.

## briefly

**Robert Helpmann** was made a knight in the New Year Honours. Frank Hauser, director of the Oxford Playhouse, received the CBE.

**Katina Paxinou** and her actor-director husband, Alexis Minotis, have resigned from the Greek National Theatre after disagreements with the new board of management appointed by the military government.

An exhibition of Modern Theatre Architecture in Germany will be on show in the main foyer of the Royal Festival Hall from February 13 to 26. It has been arranged by the architect Fritz Bornemann of Berlin.

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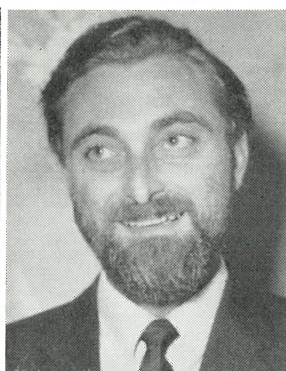
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Murdoch



Saunders

## NOVEL INTO PLAY

JAMES SAUNDERS  
talking to Michael Billington

Iris Murdoch is in an enviable position. Not only have her novels won her golden opinions and good sales but they also look like providing regular source material for Shaftesbury Avenue. *A Severed Head*, which she adapted with J B Priestley, had a long run at the Criterion Theatre and now *The Italian Girl* is at Wyndhams after getting a highly enthusiastic reception at Bristol Old Vic.

This time James Saunders is the co-adaptor and I asked him how the project had come about. 'Well, after *Severed Head*, Val May was interested in doing another adaptation and so was Iris but I'm not sure which of them first had the idea of doing *The Italian Girl*. Iris began by writing an adaptation of her own but the dialogue didn't quite have the right dramatic quality. Perhaps one might say that Iris is a better novelist than I am and I am a better playwright than she is. If I wrote a novel, I'm sure it wouldn't have the right atmospheric sense or narra-

tive flow, for instance. Anyway, Val rang up and said. 'Would I have a go' and I read the book and thought at once that the situations were very dramatic. I did a first draft, keeping both the novel and Iris's version in front of me, and then all three of us worked on it together. It was a matter of finding a scene or a situation that didn't work and then we'd all three of us think about it separately and meet again. In the end, a lot of the final revision was done by Val.'

Mr Saunders is the first to admit that the tone of the play is inevitably different from that of the novel. But thinking back to *A Severed Head* and the way some people felt it was slightly coarsened for the theatre, I wondered if we were going to get more of the essential Murdoch here. The reply was unequivocal: 'If people want the essential Murdoch, then they should read the novel.' He went on to show how even the insertion of a line can slightly alter the emphasis of a scene. At one point in the book the servant, Maggie, comes in with a tea tray to find the mistress of the house in a compromising situation with her brother-in-law. In the book we are told: 'There was a moment's silence and then the door closed again sharply. Isabel and I continued to stare at each other. She began to cry quietly.' In the play they have put in a line where Maggie says, 'Shall I bring you a cup?' and the whole situation clearly becomes absurdly comic.

One of Miss Murdoch's greatest gifts is for evoking a precise atmosphere, often in a few short sentences. 'This,' says Mr Saunders, 'is what the novel is for, rather than this particular type of entertainment. Take the scene in the book where Flora is simply sitting by a pool—it's that sort of still, quiet moment that only a novelist can capture. At other times you have to find an effect of your own that will match the novel. For instance, at one point there is a reference to Flora's *biscuit*-coloured knees and a page or two later a reference to Otto's way of piling butter and cheese in great quantities on to a *biscuit*. This is the novelist's way of establishing a counterpoint between the grossness and grotesqueness of one character and the essential charm and pleasantness of

another. The dramatist has to find a more direct way of making the same point. What you have to do is not simply adapt the novel but *try and retain the impact of the original on you*. It's like an artist doing a work based on another painting. He doesn't make it a copy. He makes it a new thing but still harks back to the old thing.'

This is clear enough. All the same, I wondered how someone whose work has a style and imprint of its own felt about doing an adaptation—and Mr Saunders, don't forget, has adapted a lot of D H Lawrence stories for television. 'Well it gives one a different kind of satisfaction from writing a play of one's own. It doesn't take your guts out in the same way. It takes a lot of energy but it isn't *essential* energy. You're not worrying all the time about whether the central thesis is valid or not—that sounds awful but you see what I'm getting at. In the same way, a composer can be asked to do a requiem but he doesn't have to worry about his own religious feelings. I may be tired, for instance, of the theme of sexual love between individuals but if I'm doing an adaptation, then I don't have to worry about this.' With an adaptation, Mr Saunders continued, it's a technical job that's on trial. 'With an original work, the playwright is on trial—it's his own moral fibre and seriousness of purpose that the critics are discussing.'

How long did this play take to write? 'About three months. It's much quicker than writing one of your own. Before that one has a long period of ingestion, then another period working out the idea and then perhaps three months of actual writing. With this, I read the novel and started at once. One could do four adaptations like this a year but I doubt whether one could do more than one play a year.'

Clearly Mr Saunders approaches a task like this with a craftsman's concern but not quite the same personal commitment that one of his own plays involves. The success of the piece will be judged simply on the pleasure it gives its audiences. 'This play,' stresses Mr Saunders, 'was conceived purely as an entertainment and not as a cry from the heart or a piece for our times.'

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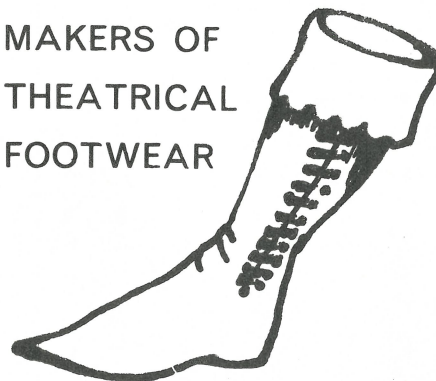
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# The Italian Girl

Complete text

By IRIS MURDOCH and JAMES SAUNDERS

## CHARACTERS

EDMUND  
OTTO                    *his brother*  
ISABEL                *Otto's wife*  
FLORA                *her daughter*  
DAVID LEVKIN       *Otto's apprentice*  
ELSA                 *David's sister*  
MAGGIE              *the Italian girl*

*(The action takes place in and around a large house in the North country.)*

## ACT ONE Scene One

*(The lawn and Isabel's room. EDMUND stands in the middle of the lawn, gazing up at the house. He is dressed in a dark overcoat and carries a suitcase. The music of Sibelius drifts out from the open window of Isabel's room and there is the sound of a stream and a waterfall in the distance. It is late morning. The sun shines coldly on the big, ugly Victorian rectory, its red brick darkened by the sour wind from nearby collieries. An almost impenetrable tangle of trees and bushes surround the house, unkempt and running wild.)*

EDMUND stares at it all for several moments in a sad reverie, a lonely figure on the empty lawn. Then another figure emerges from the trees, a lithe, slim young man. He slowly advances towards EDMUND.)

DAVID (softly): Ah—you must be the brother.

EDMUND: Yes. Who are you?

DAVID: I am your brother's apprentice. My name is David Levkin. *(He smiles.)* So you have come.

EDMUND: Yes. . . .

DAVID: The funeral is over.

EDMUND: I know. My train was late.

DAVID: Ah—such a pity. The arrangements were beautiful—the music, the flowers—

EDMUND: I'm glad.

DAVID: But now you will want to see your family. Shall I show you in?

*(He bows and extends a hand, almost mockingly.)*

EDMUND: Thank you, I can look after myself.

*(He moves towards the house.)*

DAVID: You will know where to go?

EDMUND (coldly): Of course. This is my home.

DAVID: Of course.

EDMUND: Good morning.

DAVID: Good morning. . . .

*(He bows and backs off the lawn, smiling. EDMUND stares at him for a moment, then moves round behind the house. The lights come up in Isabel's room, a luscious little boudoir, crammed with furniture and a myriad trinkets which tinkle like little bells when anyone moves. There is a large open wood fire. The curtains are drawn, shutting out most of the sunlight. ISABEL enters, followed by EDMUND. She is in smart funeral black, but she has taken*

*off her hat and loosened her dress at the neck. Her hair is no longer quite impeccable.)*

ISABEL: Come in, Edmund. I must say I've never heard of anyone being late for a funeral before. Did you do it on purpose?

*(She kicks off her shoes and pours a glass of whisky.)*

EDMUND: I've told you, Isabel, the train was forty-five minutes late.

ISABEL: You weren't hoping it would be?

EDMUND: I'd hardly be late for my mother's funeral deliberately.

ISABEL: I don't see why not, you took care to stay away while she was alive.

EDMUND: Look, I'm feeling very hot and sticky and rather foolish at rushing here to no purpose. If you don't mind, I think I'll go and clean up a little—

ISABEL: No, don't go! I'm sorry, Edmund, take no notice of me. Would you like some whisky?

EDMUND: No, thanks. But if you've got anything soft—ginger beer?

ISABEL: How about tomato juice?

EDMUND: That'll be fine. I don't drink much. . . .

ISABEL: Unlike your dear brother.

EDMUND: How is Otto?

ISABEL: Of course, you missed his performance at the funeral this morning.

EDMUND: What happened?

ISABEL: Oh, he found it all hugely amusing. Fits of laughter all through the service. They had to carry him out.

EDMUND: Oh dear.

ISABEL: Yes, it's one of life's little pleasures, being married to a drunk.

*(She hands the tomato juice to EDMUND.)*

EDMUND: Thanks. What have you done to your hand?

ISABEL: Nothing. I burnt it on the grate.

EDMUND: You really must be careful with that fire, Isabel. It's like a blast furnace. Surely you don't need it in the summer?

ISABEL: It's company. Like a dog. I enjoy feeding it.

*(She takes some drooping flowers from a vase and throws them on to the blaze. There is a sizzling sound and the room fills with a sweet pungent smell.)*

THE ITALIAN GIRL received its first performance at the Bristol Old Vic in December, 1967. It opened at Wyndham's on February 1, 1968, directed by Val May, and has the following cast:—

EDMUND	Richard Pasco
ISABEL	Elizabeth Sellars
MAGGIE	Jane Wenham
OTTO	Timothy West
ELSA	Imogen Hassell
DAVID LEVKIN	Christopher Guinee
FLORA	Deborah Grant

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The Italian Girl is based on the novel by Iris Murdoch, published by Chatto and Windus.



EDMUND (*mopping his brow*): It's terribly hot in here. . . .

ISABEL: Then take your jacket off.

(*He moves away, bumping into a chair.*)

And why don't you sit down? You'll break something in a minute.

EDMUND: I'll stand if you don't mind.

ISABEL: Cigarette?

EDMUND: No, thanks, I don't smoke.

(*ISABEL lights one for herself.*)

How are things generally, Isabel?

ISABEL: You don't know how lucky you were to get away from this house. . . . You escaped just in time. It must be pleasant to be able to come and visit. . . . Have you had lunch?

EDMUND: No, I don't much like train meals and I thought

ISABEL: Then you can stay and have something with me up here. I want to talk to you before the others get at you. The Italian girl's bringing some sandwiches.

EDMUND: But I'm afraid I—

ISABEL: I know you're a vegetarian, but there'll be some fruit. I remember you like fruit.

EDMUND: Thanks.

ISABEL: No red meat and no alcohol—no wonder you look so handsome and bright-eyed and alert! Dear Edmund, and how are things in the south? Still leading the same quiet, ordered, chaste existence?

EDMUND: Oh, well, you know—

ISABEL: You're a free man. We're all prisoners here. God, how I hate this North country. It's so black, so cold, so Gothic . . . Otto's Gothic. He is the north—primitive, gross. He's the sort of man who *prefers* to pee into the washbasin.

(*She taps her wedding ring with exasperation on the mantelpiece.*)

EDMUND (*sympathetically*): I know how you must feel. . . .

ISABEL: I wish you'd take that commiserating look off your face. You don't even know what you're supposed to be commiserating about. You don't know anything. . . .

EDMUND (*changing the subject*): How is Otto's work?

ISABEL: You'd better ask him. We no longer co-habit. That is, he stays in his workshop, among the gravestones . . . (*with a gesture towards the window*) I believe he's turned the place into a properly appointed sty, so we keep effectively out of each other's way.

EDMUND: I met his new apprentice on my way in. A very strange young man. I wasn't sure whether he was insolent or just—foreign.

ISABEL: Both. That's David Levkin. Rather pretty, isn't he?

EDMUND: I suppose he is.

ISABEL: He sleeps over there as well.

EDMUND: What?

ISABEL: Oh, don't worry, it's quite platonic. But then, you wouldn't imagine otherwise. The last one left, you know, with all the loose cash he could lay hands on. Needless to say, Otto did nothing about it as usual.

EDMUND: Where does he find them?

ISABEL: I don't enquire. Perhaps he digs them out of the ground.

(*She gives a nervous little musical laugh.*)

This one isn't doing anything outrageous at the moment, apart from inflicting some mad creature on us who's supposed to be his sister. Well, she may be.

EDMUND: Where does she stay?

ISABEL: In the trunk of a hollow tree, I should think. You're making me very restless, Edmund. I wish you'd sit down. . . .

EDMUND: I'm afraid of breaking a chair like I did last time.

(*ISABEL throws a log on to the fire.*)

Do you have to put any more on, Isabel? It really is stifling in here. . . .

ISABEL: I need warmth.

EDMUND: Well, do you think we could have the gramophone off? I do hate music in the background.

ISABEL: I need music too. I don't know what I'd do without it. I wrap it round me like a wild cloak. (*She switches off the gramophone.*) I've been so damned lonely. . . .

EDMUND: I'm sorry. (*Sympathetically.*) How long has it been going on?

ISABEL: What?

EDMUND: Otto.

ISABEL: You mean the boozing? He took it up, let's say, professionally when your mother got too ill to love him and bully him any more. Lydia may have been a bloody tyrant, but she was the only one who could control him.

EDMUND (*shocked*): Isabel, please. . . .

ISABEL: Edmund, I'm going to change out of these weeds. (*She begins undoing the buttons. EDMUND gets up hurriedly.*)

Oh, do sit down! You're like a scalded cat. You don't have to look. . . .

(*EDMUND sits down again and carefully doesn't look round as ISABEL changes into a flowered dressing-gown.*)

And it's no use pretending to be shocked. Lydia was a bloody tyrant and you know it! She suffocated us all. Didn't you beg Otto to take his chance when he married me and get away from her? But of course he couldn't. She'd half eaten him up already. You were the only one with the strength to break free.

EDMUND: Well, anyway, you're free now, aren't you?

ISABEL: Don't be a fool, Edmund!

(*She pours another drink, and is by now slightly intoxicated.*)

You know as well as I do that one can be imprisoned in one's own mind. Somebody once said Hell was like a dark cupboard—well, I live in that cupboard all the time. We had nearly twenty years of destroying ourselves and each other to spite Lydia. Her departure doesn't wind it all back to the beginning again like a film. We go on like machinery no one knows how to stop. Where's the freedom in that?

EDMUND: I think that's up to you, Isabel.

ISABEL: You do.

EDMUND: I know it's been difficult for you. Lydia did treat you pretty badly. But she's gone now, and there is such a thing as free will, we're not all machines. If you'd brace up a little, let cheerfulness break in occasionally, you could still lead a useful, independent life. Get out more, do some sort of social work, think about other people's troubles for a change—

ISABEL (*pouncing on this, still half-dressed*): You think I'm idiotic and self-centred?

(*EDMUND sighs.*)

EDMUND: Frankly, yes.

ISABEL (*going up behind him*): You're so right. My life is a divertissement. Not like yours. You lead a good life. You help people. It isn't easy to be like that.

EDMUND: I'm not sure. It just suits me that way. Father's example I suppose. . . . Lydia once said to me: 'Your father is not really a good man, only a timid man with unworldly tastes.' I wonder if she was right. . . .

ISABEL: He should never have married her. He ought to have been a monk. In a way you're living out his life for him. But at least you've escaped her.

EDMUND: I'm not sure about that either. You know, you



were right in a way about my wanting to be late this morning. I sat in the train almost willing it not to be on time; as a kind of revenge, I suppose, to be late for her funeral, a last rather petty gesture of defiance. But by the time the train got in I was so ashamed I rushed to the crematorium like a madman, desperate not to miss her. But there was no one there. It was empty.

ISABEL: They'd probably burnt her by then.

EDMUND: The funniest thing of all is that this morning, having carefully checked the trains back this afternoon, I packed an overnight bag. . . .

(A knock, and MAGGIE enters immediately with a tray of sandwiches. She hesitates for a moment, confronted with what could be a compromising vignette—ISABEL, her dressing-gown unfastened, one hand on the back of EDMUND'S chair or on his shoulder. EDMUND, not knowing whether ISABEL is dressed or not, jumps to his feet. ISABEL steps back at the sudden movement. MAGGIE'S face is as expressionless as a servant's. She puts down the tray.)

Hallo, Carlotta, how are you? You remember me?

MAGGIE: I remember you of course, Edmund. (To ISABEL.) Shall I bring some more sandwiches, I've only provided for you. . . . ?

ISABEL: No, that'll be plenty, I'm sure.

EDMUND: Thank you, Carlotta.

(MAGGIE goes out silently.)

ISABEL: You can look round now.

(ISABEL examines the sandwiches.)

Let's see. You're in luck. Tomato and cucumber.

EDMUND: I remember Otto and I used to get on very well with Carlotta.

ISABEL: I'm sure you did. Only her name's Maggie.

EDMUND: What? Well, why on earth didn't you tell me?

ISABEL: She didn't seem to mind.

EDMUND: Of course she did! People get so upset when you can't remember their names. And I knew her perfectly well, really. . . .

ISABEL: Don't fuss, Edmund. She was only your nursery maid. Have a sandwich.

EDMUND: Carlotta must have been the last one. Of course, she left when we were fourteen. . . . Anyway, if you were so lonely, what about Maggie?

ISABEL: Lydia took over Maggie like everything else. Swallowed her down, poor little thing.

EDMUND: There still seems to be some left. . . . Do you think we could open the curtains, Isabel, and let some sunshine in?

ISABEL: Open them, then.

(EDMUND does so. Sunlight does indeed stream in.)

What happens now? The fairy godmother?

(EDMUND stares out of the window.)

EDMUND (in wonderment): Good Lord. . . .

ISABEL: What is it?

EDMUND: Could that really be Flora?

ISABEL: I expect so.

EDMUND: But she looks so grown up.

ISABEL: Seventeen. You've been away a long time.

EDMUND: She was just a little girl. . . . How very pretty she is. Alice in Wonderland! Look, she's making a daisy chain. She really is a subject for a water-colour.

ISABEL: You're wondering how Otto and I could produce such a picture of innocence.

(EDMUND grunts, absorbed by the sight of FLORA.)

But then how could Lydia produce both you and Otto, there's another mystery.

EDMUND (absently): What?

(He is still looking out of the window. ISABEL comes up behind him to look out. A pause.)

ISABEL: Still all alone, Edmund?

(EDMUND moves away from the window.)

EDMUND: Yes.

(He looks at his watch.)

I really think I ought to go and see Otto now, Isabel, if you'll excuse me. . . .

ISABEL: How long are you staying?

EDMUND: Well, there's a train at four o'clock.

(He is going towards the door.)

ISABEL: What?

(He turns. Her hands are crossed at her throat in an attitude of horror and supplication.)

ISABEL: No!

(She stretches out an arm towards him, melodramatic as a Cassandra.)

You can't go!

EDMUND: Isabel, please—

ISABEL: We need you! Otto needs you. You're the only one who can heal us.

EDMUND: I'm no healer.

ISABEL: You are. You're a good man, and you're free. You've got to set us free!

EDMUND: I have my own troubles!

ISABEL: You! What troubles?

(EDMUND stands irresolutely at the door. ISABEL is obviously, now, somewhat tipsy. He pities her; but pity is just another part of the machine he doesn't want to be drawn into.)

EDMUND: I'm not competent to—help you or anyone else. I don't know what it is you want. As for being free . . .

I live a quiet life in London. I do my engravings. It may not be very exciting, and it has its—inadequacies, but—

ISABEL: Oh, all right!

EDMUND: I'm sorry, Isabel—

ISABEL: Go on. Go on. Go back to your—good life!

EDMUND: Please forgive me.

(He exits.)

ISABEL turns away to the window with an expression of despair.

The lights fade.)

## ACT ONE Scene Two

(Otto's workshop. Large pieces of worked and unworked stone rise and recede about a central space with a megalithic solemnity, like a meeting-place of Druids. The irregular white-washed walls are gauzed with innumerable cobwebs. The floor is covered with multi-coloured stone dust. On a long marble tomb lies OTTO, his eyes closed. Standing nearby, his head on one side, contemplating OTTO is DAVID LEVKIN. He sings, perhaps for OTTO, perhaps for himself, a sad snatch of song in Russian. After a moment he stealthily moves towards his master and arranges his hands in a praying position over his belly so that he lies, uncharacteristically, in the serene self-contained pose of the tomb statue. Instead of a dog at his feet, however, DAVID places a whisky bottle. Hearing a noise, he scurries behind the door.)

EDMUND enters. Confronted with the absurd tableau he stops.)

EDMUND: What the devil—?

(DAVID comes up behind him and hisses in his ear, making him jump.)

DAVID: My Lord sleeps. Ssssh.

(He tiptoes from the workshop, a finger exaggeratedly to his lips. EDMUND, feeling foolish, as though unaccountably caught up in amateur theatricals, approaches the tomb. He speaks, in spite of himself, in a low voice.)

EDMUND: Otto. . . .

(No response.)



(Angrily.) Otto!

(No response, but DAVID returns, this time with no pretence at tiptoes, a plate with butter, biscuits and cheese in his hand. EDMUND turns his anger on to him.)

EDMUND: Are you responsible for this?

DAVID: To him, yes; for him, no.

EDMUND: You know what I mean.

DAVID: Ah, the arrangement. You like it? Some people arrange flowers, I arrange my Lord Otto. You wish him awake?

EDMUND: Yes.

(DAVID stands by OTTO.)

DAVID: Such a pity that life must all the time take over from Art. Not for you, of course, you engrave, no? On metal?

EDMUND: Wood.

DAVID: On dead wood. So you have nothing to fear. But the poor arranger of flowers, Mr Edmund, what of him? Suddenly a breeze blows, the leaves curl up, the petals fall. . . .

EDMUND: Will you kindly wake him up.

DAVID: My Lord Otto. . . . Time for life again. . . .

(He says this softly, as though waking a child. But OTTO'S reaction is immediate. He goes into a kind of convulsion, battling apparently with the exorcism of the remains of a dream.)

DAVID watches sadly as his composition disintegrates; catching the kicked bottle before it reaches the floor; making soothing noises. OTTO struggles finally into a sitting position. He groans.)

Shall I make you a delicious alka-seltzer, my Lord?

OTTO: I need a pee.

DAVID: Alas, my Lord. . . .

OTTO: Oh, very well, I'll do it myself.

(He staggers outside.)

DAVID: As you see, his work is still very good. Impeccable, that is the word? Consider this cherub—the wings are good, yes? And all done from memory.

(EDMUND looks at the stone.)

Mr Edmund, if there is something you wish to know about your brother. . . .

(EDMUND looks up sharply.)

EDMUND: What would I want to know?

(DAVID spreads his hands and hunches his shoulders in a parody of the gesture, grinning.)

DAVID: You prefer to find out for yourself. This is more fun, I agree.

EDMUND: Levkin, considering you are my brother's apprentice—

DAVID: I agree, I agree, I am too familiar. I learn too much English idiom, you see, it goes to my head. Ah, but one you will like. 'Know your place.' Yes. I must know my place. Excuse me, excuse me.

(He backs away from EDMUND, bowing, and thus meets OTTO coming in. OTTO pushes him aside like a blade of grass in his path, and DAVID goes out in high spirits. OTTO has clutched in one hand a great bunch of greenstuff. He has seen EDMUND at last.)

OTTO: Ed, there you are, how are you?

(He thrusts out the fistful of greenstuff, shrugs, shakes hands perfunctorily with his left.)

OTTO: I didn't see you at the funeral. But then I didn't see anyone at the funeral.

EDMUND: The train was late.

OTTO: Luck or judgment? I was overcome, you heard about that?

EDMUND: Yes.

OTTO: Yes. Well sit down, Ed, it's good to see you. You don't know how we need someone like you around, the

figure of sanity. My God, look at you, it's like— What's it like? I tell you, Ed, my brain is seizing up like a rotten sewer. What is it like?!

(He beats his head.)

EDMUND: Look, Otto, I don't have a great deal of time—

OTTO: I know! Seeing you there is like struggling through a jungle—through all the undergrowth, you know, and the shrieks of the wild beasts—and there, in the centre, in a little clearing, is a municipal statue in Portland stone.

(He motions to EDMUND as he says this, and continues to stare at him, as if waiting for him to disappear, as he continues.)

The trouble is, in these surroundings it's the statue that seems unreal, a dream from another world, oh my God!

(He seems in sudden pain. EDMUND is concerned.)

EDMUND: What is it?

OTTO: My dream, I just remembered. There was this huge tiger prowling round the house, and I picked up the telephone to call for help, but the dial was all made of marzipan—and this tiger—

EDMUND (trying to interrupt): Otto—

OTTO: All right, I won't bore you with it, it's worse than showing the holiday snapshots, only my dreams are no holiday, believe me. Now there's a paradox, Ed, my waking hours are an almost unbroken state of stupefaction but the minute I fall asleep it's as if I'm naked on the back of some great black bloody mare, hanging on to its mane for dear life as it gallops through all hell. There's something wrong there, Ed, wouldn't you say?

EDMUND: If you don't mind, Otto, I do rather want to catch the next train, and there are one or two things to be settled—

OTTO: Same old Ed. Nothing troubling you I suppose?

EDMUND: I'm very well, thank you, Otto.

OTTO: That's fine. I'm very well too. And Isabel's very well. And Flora's very well. And Maggie, you've seen Maggie?

EDMUND: Yes. I called her Carlotta.

OTTO: That's understandable. I have a vivid memory of Maggie wheeling me in my pram, but I'm told it's impossible.

EDMUND: Unless you were still in your pram at fourteen.

OTTO: Well, what does it matter? Whoever was in my pram it wasn't me, that's obvious, so who cares who wheeled it. . . . Have you had lunch?

EDMUND: I had a sandwich with Isabel.

OTTO: Hm. Well, help yourself if you want some greenstuff. Plenty more outside. Marjorum, parsley, mint, what have we here—?

(He takes out a leaf, eats it.)

Dandelion, not bad. Funny, isn't it, that we're both vegetarians. Something to do with Lydia, I expect. What isn't?

EDMUND: Otto, ought you to be sitting on that thing?

OTTO: Where should I be, inside?

EDMUND: I was thinking of piles.

OTTO: There you are, that's what I mean, you're a breath of reality, you come here and you think of piles. But no, actually constipation's my forte, strangely enough. Does it bother you?

EDMUND (looking at his watch): Look, Otto—

OTTO: Well, what did she say?

EDMUND: Who?

OTTO: Isabel of course.

EDMUND: What about?

OTTO: Ed, for Christ's sake we're brothers. What did she say about me!

EDMUND: Nothing.

OTTO: That's a bloody lie for a start.

EDMUND: Now look here, Otto—



OTTO: I'll tell you what she said. She said I was disgusting. Not in so many words, of course, wrapped up in her special brand of saw-toothed irony; like a bee stinging. 'I know it'll tear my guts out to say this, *but*.' My God, how right you were not to marry.

EDMUND: I didn't *decide* not to. I'm just not the marrying kind, I suppose.

OTTO: Really?

(OTTO looks at him with close interest.)

EDMUND (hurriedly): Being single has its disadvantages too, you know.

OTTO: Oh yes, carnal ones. But *spiritually*, Ed, you're in the clear. I could have been a good man if I hadn't married. And hadn't had Lydia for a mother. And a few other things.

(His eyes glaze. His mouth, full of food, stays open—)

EDMUND: Do you think it's quite fair to put the blame on Isabel?

OTTO: Fair? Of course it's not *fair*. But when a marriage gets poison in it everything gets infected. It's like a decomposing carcass, a single, undelinated, poisonous stew. I can't even feel any proper regret any more, I sort of enjoy this disgusting mess.

(He puts his hands over his eyes and cries.)

EDMUND: Otto, for God's sake pull yourself together. . . .

OTTO: I'm sorry. I just remembered Lydia, the bitch! Do you want some whisky, or are you still on the wagon?

EDMUND: I'm not on the wagon, I just don't like the stuff. Haven't you had enough for today?

OTTO: Ah, you don't understand addiction. I have, therefore I want.

EDMUND: Frankly I find that meaningless.

OTTO: Naturally, you're a good man, you live in a sane world. But don't think I envy you. You're under a curse too, the same curse. Go on, admit it. It's just taken us different ways, that's all. You remember that thing Father was always quoting, about the two birds on the tree, how one eats the fruit and the other watches and doesn't eat? Well, you're the one that watches and I'm the one that eats. You can't eat. I can't stop. Until you've starved to death and I've burst. . . .

(He makes a gagging sound, and carries on with his lunch.)

EDMUND: We still have our work, Otto.

OTTO (morosely): Tombstones.

(He sweeps his hand round the workshop at the unfinished pieces.)

EDMUND: Nonsense, you've done some fine things; and you will again.

(OTTO shakes his head. He takes something from his mouth.)

Now, listen—

OTTO: Would you care for half a caterpillar?

(EDMUND makes a gesture of despair.)

(Studying the caterpillar.) Poor little blighter. I wonder what it's like to be eaten? What am I saying! We *know*.

EDMUND (after a pause): Yes.

OTTO (suddenly): Ed, I want to explain what happened at the funeral this morning—

(EDMUND stirs uneasily.)

EDMUND: For God's sake, Otto.

OTTO: I want to explain.

EDMUND: But I wasn't even *there*.

OTTO: All the more reason. If you had been there you might have understood.

EDMUND: I don't have to understand, it's none of my—

OTTO: Besides, who else can I talk to? The others don't know a bloody thing. To them I was just sozzled.

EDMUND: Yes, well—

OTTO: Yes, well I was, but that was the least of it. That

was only the trigger. What I had was some sort of . . . mystical experience. Do you have to look at your damned watch every minute?

EDMUND: Sorry, Otto.

(He sits down.)

OTTO: I was sitting there, Ed, and I was as drunk as a tick. I'd been at it since yesterday afternoon, in preparation, because I knew if I didn't something awful would happen. Getting drunk is like drowning, Ed, at least I imagine so; there's a long last moment when you not only have no control, you have no *responsibility*; because it's not *yours*, this body, it's like some gross bladder you happen to have wandered into and got stuck. Are you with me?

EDMUND: Yes, Otto.

OTTO: Well, that's the state I was in when Lydia was carted by. (He pauses.) And there we all were, Isabel, Maggie, me, you—

EDMUND: Otto, I wasn't there—

OTTO: We *all* were—her household, lined up in our Sunday best in front of her, sitting up and begging like the big moment in a circus act, waiting for Lydia to give us the word to get down. And there was that damn silly coffin. . . . (He giggles.)

And she wasn't even there, Ed. She wasn't even *there*! It was so entirely ludicrous (*his whole body is heaving uncontrollably*) but I wasn't laughing *at* her, I was laughing *with* her. . . .

(He sobs, whether with laughter or tears it is impossible to say.)

EDMUND (suddenly, determined): Otto, did Lydia leave a will?

(OTTO stares at him.)

Then he speaks softly.)

OTTO: God Almighty, the poor bitch is just dead and you're talking about wills. . . .

(He is suddenly crying again.)

EDMUND: I'm sorry, Otto. But I shall mourn in *my* way.

OTTO: I know. You'll go home and think it all out. You're a close one. I just miss her like hell, that's all.

(He cries, fairly silently.)

EDMUND: Please, Otto—It's just that—I'm not a rich man and—

OTTO: I know, I know, she's gone. Only her money's left. . . .

EDMUND: I didn't mean that. Look, I'll write later—

OTTO: No, no, it's all right.

(He wipes his face with a work-rag.)

I haven't found any will. At least Isabel hasn't, she started looking at the first stroke. Maybe there isn't one.

EDMUND: That wouldn't be like Lydia.

OTTO: Anyway she's probably left equal shares.

EDMUND: Left it all to you more likely. She never forgave me for leaving.

OTTO: Well, anyway. . . .

EDMUND: Well, anyway. . . .

OTTO: Exactly. . . .

(There is a moment's silence, filled with a sad hopelessness. EDMUND puts out his hand. OTTO takes it.)

EDMUND: Well, Otto. . . .

OTTO: Wiping the dust off your feet again? I don't blame you. Get to hell out, Ed, we're no good here, we're finished. You know what, we've lost our innocence. There, look, see?

(He looks through the doorway.)

EDMUND: Flora.

(They go to the door of the workshop. Outside the lawn is now golden in the afternoon sun. In the middle of a haze of gold stands FLORA. She has put on her sun hat



*and the blue ribbon is tied in a big bow under her chin. She walks slowly away into the green shadow in the direction of the pool.)*

OTTO: There's the difference. Look at her, standing there living with it. It absorbs her every moment and she doesn't even know she's got it.

EDMUND: Innocence. . . .

OTTO: Innocence. To be good is just never to lose it. How does evil begin in life? How *can* it begin? Yet we were there once. . . .

*(They both gaze towards FLORA. DAVID enters quietly. He casts a humorous glance in FLORA'S direction.)*

DAVID: And now to work, my Lord Otto, yes?

*(EDMUND turns.)*

OTTO: Yes, David.

*(DAVID picks up the plate, flicks crumbs off the tomb and goes.)*

EDMUND: Why do you let him address you in that idiotic way?

OTTO: He's a good boy. He worships me, you know.

EDMUND: Goodbye, Otto.

*(He goes. OTTO turns, and picks up a work tool in one hand, the bottle in the other. EDMUND crosses the lawn, looks for a moment as if he's going to speak to FLORA, but she is disappearing down a path, and he goes on into the kitchen.)*

### ACT ONE Scene Three

*(The kitchen.)*

*MAGGIE is preparing the evening meal. MAGGIE is part of the kitchen, deft, machine-like and therefore comforting; EDMUND, as usual, seems somewhat out of place, unsettled. There is a pause.)*

EDMUND: Che cosa stai combinando, Maggie?

MAGGIE: Pollo alla cacciatora. You are staying for supper?

EDMUND: I don't know. I've missed the five o'clock. . . . I could stay and catch the night train, I suppose, but it's pointless—there's nothing to keep me here.

MAGGIE: You must get back to your busy London life.

EDMUND: Not really. . . .

*(He glances out of the window. FLORA is still on the lawn.)*

What a lovely child! You must all be so fond of her.

MAGGIE: Flora?

EDMUND: Yes.

*(MAGGIE gets on with the meal.)*

Pollo alla cacciatora, I remember that. You used to leave out the garlic for us boys.

MAGGIE: One doesn't leave the garlic out of this, not for anyone.

EDMUND: I must be thinking of something else. . . . Maggie, I'm awfully sorry about your name. I did know it was you, of course, it was just the name. There were so many of you, you know. Now, let me see, you're from Verona.

MAGGIE: No, that was Guilia. I come from Rome.

EDMUND: Rome, yes, of course, now I remember! There was that game we played. . . .

MAGGIE: What game?

EDMUND: That fantasy. You were to kidnap me and carry me away to Rome. Or was that Carlotta?

MAGGIE: No, that was me.

EDMUND: Long, long ago. . . . And I've still not been to Rome. . . . Now who was it taught us all the Italian songs? Was that Carlotta?

MAGGIE: No, that was me too.

EDMUND: Let me see. . . . Oh, I've forgotten. . . . 'La strada—' . . . 'La strada del bosco—' No, it's all gone.

MAGGIE: What else do you remember?

EDMUND: Not much, I'm afraid. This kitchen, of course.

The hours I spent here doing my homework. . . . And the garden. . . . there was a favourite spot of mine—

MAGGIE: The pool.

EDMUND: With the cascade, yes. It used to be my private place. I have an engraving somewhere; one of my early attempts. It's a lovely subject.

MAGGIE: I remember you introducing me to the pool when I first came here.

EDMUND: Did I, Maggie?

MAGGIE: Oh, yes. I was honoured. Or perhaps it was Carlotta. . . .

EDMUND: All those Italian girls, like an endless succession of second mothers. . . . I wonder where they all are now.

MAGGIE: Married.

*(She begins chopping carrots. EDMUND gets up and changes the subject.)*

EDMUND: People in the north dream about the south, you know. The warmth, the songs—

MAGGIE: I used to dream about the north once. Things can look different from a distance.

EDMUND: *(eating a carrot)* Maggie. . . . ought I to have stayed with Lydia?

MAGGIE: Why do you ask me?

EDMUND: Well, you stayed, and the others. . . .

MAGGIE: We are not you. Which do you want, to be praised or to be scolded?

EDMUND: I just thought you might have some feelings about it.

MAGGIE: What are your feelings about it?

EDMUND: Well. . . . mixed.

MAGGIE: Then you must unmix them.

EDMUND: Anyway, it makes no difference now.

*(He moves away to the window.)*

MAGGIE: Then what are you waiting for?

EDMUND: *(staring out)* What?

MAGGIE: It doesn't matter.

EDMUND: Maggie, do you think this is the right kind of environment for a girl of Flora's age?

MAGGIE: Do you have another environment in mind?

EDMUND: Surely somebody ought to be taking some sort of interest in her? I know Otto and Isabel have their—difficulties, but I do think they should consider the effect an— atmosphere like this might have on an impressionable child. She needs affection, love. . . .

MAGGIE: Have you any suggestions?

EDMUND: If you could keep a friendly eye on her. Would you?

MAGGIE: A motherly eye?

EDMUND: Well, you know, have a word with her now and again, and keep me informed—

MAGGIE: What of?

EDMUND: Well, the general—

MAGGIE: Why don't you have a word with her yourself?

EDMUND: I really ought to get back. . . .

MAGGIE: The pool is her private place, now, you know.

EDMUND: Really? Flora's?

MAGGIE: Perhaps she goes there to remember her favourite Uncle Edmund. That should please you.

*(She picks up a knife. Her tone has imperceptibly hardened.)*

I shall now chop an onion.

*(The knife cuts through the onion as FLORA pops her head in through the window.)*

FLORA: Hallo, Uncle Edmund.

EDMUND: Flora, my dear child!

*(FLORA enters.)*

Only you're not a child anymore.

FLORA: I'm afraid not.

EDMUND: Let me see, how long is it since I last saw you?



FLORA: I don't know, I was eleven, I think. I've been waiting for you to come and say hello.

EDMUND: I'm sorry, you looked so peaceful I didn't like to disturb you. You looked as if you might be composing a poem or something.

FLORA: No, Uncle Edmund, actually I wasn't composing a poem.

(*She looks steadily at him, smiling.*)

EDMUND: Well, sit down and tell me all about yourself. And you must call me 'Edmund' now that you're so grown-up. 'Uncle' doesn't sound quite right any more, does it?

FLORA: No, it doesn't sound quite right any more, does it? All right, Edmund.

EDMUND: Let me see—You've left school?

FLORA: I'm at Technical College, doing textile design.

EDMUND: Are you now? That was one of your Grandfather's interests, you know. He was a great believer in putting the arts to use. And I daresay you've inherited a talent, have you?

FLORA: I cope.

EDMUND: One is so lucky to be an artist—

FLORA: Daddy says all your remarks are designed to improve people.

EDMUND: Oh he does, does he!

FLORA: And how are you, Uncle Edmund, Edmund?

EDMUND: Oh, I'm very—

FLORA: How long are you staying for?

EDMUND: Well, I thought I might try and catch the 5.30—

FLORA: Why?

EDMUND: I must—get back to work—

FLORA: Why?

EDMUND: Well, I don't absolutely have to—

FLORA: Don't then!

(*She puts a flower in his buttonhole.*)

EDMUND: (*pleased*) Oh, thank you!

(*MAGGIE collects up her cooking dishes noisily.*)

FLORA: Maggie, do you have to go on and on working like that?

MAGGIE: What do you expect me to do?

FLORA: I don't know. Something different. Everything ought to be different somehow—

EDMUND: Maggie's right. Life must go on, mustn't it, Maggie? All the simple everyday things—

FLORA: I don't like that word. Nothing's simple.

EDMUND: Well, I really think I ought to be going . . .

FLORA: But you haven't looked at the stream and the pool! It's all different now, do come and look.

EDMUND: If I go there I certainly won't get away this evening—

FLORA: Come on. I want to talk to you. We can't talk here . . .

(*She runs out on to the lawn.*)

EDMUND: Why not?

FLORA: (*calling through the window*) Come on!

(*EDMUND follows her on to the lawn, looking at MAGGIE as he passes, but she is intent on her work.*)

## ACT ONE Scene Four

*The lawn and the pool.*

(*FLORA and EDMUND come on to the lawn and look at the path to the pool. EDMUND stops.*)

EDMUND: Flora, I can't go down that path, not in my best trousers.

FLORA: Your funeral trousers.

EDMUND: My funeral trousers. No, really, look, it's all overgrown with brambles. You'll tear your pretty legs.

FLORA: Oh, come on . . .

(*She leads down to the pool and sits by its edge. EDMUND*

*follows slowly. The sad music of Sibelius wafts out from ISABEL'S open window.*)

EDMUND: It's strange to think this was all planned once. Sometime in the eighteenth century someone arranged it all, the lawn, the course of the stream, the pool and the waterfall. Art working on nature. But nature must forever fight back, try to regain her old power . . . I'm afraid she's being allowed to win here, which is a pity . . . but it is beautiful still.

(*He sits beside her.*)

Aren't we lucky, Flora, to have been brought up in such a lovely place? I used to spend hours out here, you know, when I was your age. It must have its effect. A sort of spiritual—

FLORA: Will you look after me, Uncle Edmund?

EDMUND: Of course, dear, there's nothing I'd rather do.

FLORA: You used to call me dear like that when I was a little girl.

EDMUND: You're still a little girl.

(*He strokes her hair.*)

FLORA: Ach . . .

(*She shakes her head away from him and pulls something from a strand of her hair.*)

EDMUND: You are to me . . . What have you got there? A money spider. They're supposed to be lucky, aren't they? (*Suddenly FLORA is crying.*)

Don't grieve, Flora. I know how fond you were of your grandmother but—

(*FLORA shakes her head violently, still staring at her hand.*)

FLORA: It's not that.

EDMUND: What is it, then?

(*FLORA says nothing, stares at the back of her hand; with a stroke of her forefinger she wipes the little creature out. She looks at EDMUND.*)

FLORA: Uncle Edmund, do you really have to catch that train?

EDMUND: Edmund.

FLORA: Edmund.

EDMUND: Well, perhaps the next one might do. But you must tell me what's the matter? Are you sure it isn't Lydia?

FLORA: Yes. I want you to stay here and do something for me. You're the only possible person. Will you?

EDMUND: Look, child, of course I want to help you, but without knowing what it is—

(*FLORA jumps up.*)

FLORA: Oh, it doesn't matter . . . It's nothing, nothing. I'm sorry I bothered you.

(*She begins to walk away.*)

EDMUND: Wait!

(*She stops and looks over her shoulder.*)

I'll stay, if it's really necessary, of course.

FLORA: Thank you, Edmund.

(*She sighs, and passes her fingers over her face.*)

EDMUND: Now, tell me about it.

(*FLORA mumbles something.*)

What was that? I didn't hear you—

FLORA: I'm going to have a baby.

EDMUND: *What?*

FLORA: Do you want me to shout it? I'm pregnant!

(*EDMUND turns away, aghast.*)

And you've got to help me. You've just got to. I'm frightened.

EDMUND: But— are you certain?

FLORA: Yes. I had a test.

EDMUND: (*distressed*) Oh, my child—

FLORA: I'm not a child. I'm seventeen. I suppose you're shocked.



EDMUND: I'm horrified— that such a thing should have happened to you . . . Who is it? Who did this?  
 FLORA: That doesn't matter.  
 EDMUND: Of course it matters!  
 FLORA: Oh well, it's a boy at College— Charlie Hopgood. But he's not important.  
 EDMUND: I should have thought he was extremely important! Have you told your parents?  
 FLORA: No.  
 EDMUND: Then we must!  
 FLORA: Don't be a fool. You know my father—he'd kill someone! Oh God, why did I ever tell you!  
*(She starts to go back towards the house.)*  
 EDMUND: Please be calm! I'm trying to understand . . . Do you love this man? Do you want to marry him?  
 FLORA: No! I've told you he's nothing. Don't bully me! If you won't help me, go away. Go and catch your beastly train.  
*(She moves away again.)*  
 EDMUND: *(catching hold of her)* Flora! I will help you. Of course I'll stay.  
 FLORA: And you won't tell the others?  
 EDMUND: I promise. Please let's talk about it.  
 FLORA: *(after a pause, looking at him more hopefully)* All right. Thank you, Edmund. But can we talk about it tomorrow?  
 EDMUND: Tomorrow?  
 FLORA: Please.  
 EDMUND: If you like, but—  
 FLORA: I can't— say any more now: I want to be by myself to think things out. As long as I know you'll be here tomorrow.  
 EDMUND: I'll be here.  
 FLORA: Come and see me early in the morning? Come up and have breakfast in my room. Eight o'clock. I always have breakfast there.  
 EDMUND: Yes, eight o'clock.  
 FLORA: Promise?  
 EDMUND: I promise. And promise me you won't do anything foolish.  
 FLORA: I'll try. Only for God's sake look after me.  
*(She kisses him quickly and goes into the house. EDMUND sits on the ground with a groan, and buries his head in his hands.)*  
 EDMUND: Flora . . .  
*(Darkness falls.)*

## ACT ONE Scene Five

*The lawn.*

*(The figure of a WOMAN appears on the grass, pale in the misty darkness. A torch flashes. The WOMAN is wearing a long shapeless dress of some kind and is using the torch to examine the ground. She utters a low, sighing moan.)*

EDMUND starts and looks up.)

EDMUND: Who's that?

*(The torch goes out.)*

Who's there

*(The WOMAN moans again. EDMUND moves towards her. She does not stir, but looks at him silently. He stops a little distance away from her.)*

What do you want?

*(Pause.)*

ELSA: Who am I?

EDMUND: Yes, who are you?

*(Suddenly she shines her torch straight into his face.)*

ELSA: You are the brother, yes?

EDMUND: Yes, I—

ELSA: You are very welcome here. We have waited for you a long time.

EDMUND: Can I help you?

ELSA: I am Elsa.

EDMUND: You must be David Levkin's sister.

ELSA: Yes, I am Elsa. Did I frighten you?

EDMUND: Of course not. What are you doing here?

ELSA: I come to see the worms dance.

EDMUND: The worms dance?

ELSA: You see, here they are, so many of them.

*(She shines the torch on the ground.)*

On a warm night, when is all wet on the grass, come so many worms, almost you have to step on them . . .

EDMUND: I remember Otto used to show me—

ELSA: Look, look.

*(EDMUND is silent, watching them.)*

They lie so close they criss-cross their bodies. See, so red, so wet, so long—each one stretches so with his tail in his hole. And if you touch— ouf, he whisk back so quickly—is just his nose.

EDMUND: *(disgusted, but fascinated)* The earth's thick with them—

ELSA: So red, so long, so wriggly—

*(She shines the torch in his face.)*

Do you like them?

EDMUND: I think I'd better be going in.

ELSA: No. You will come with me.

*(She holds the torch beam hypnotically in his eyes and slowly backs towards the workshop.)*

We have waited for you. Come, come, come—

*(She opens the door.)*

ELSA: Come, please, come.

*(He goes in after her. She turns on the light. The long dress turns out to be a nightdress. ELSA'S feet are bare.)*

There, now I have you!

*(She stands between him and the doorway.)*

And now I keep you to play with.

*(EDMUND laughs nervously.)*

No, not to laugh. I am a witch, you see, a rusalka, as we say in Russian. I can make such spells. You don't believe me? Shall I put one on you now? I make a spell so you are not afraid of me, then you will do what you want. True?

EDMUND: *(moving towards the door)* I really must be going—

ELSA: No! *(she pins his toe to the ground with her foot)* You see? You cannot go. Oh, I know all about you, Mr Edmund from the south. You are the good Edmund—you come to make everything good, like a miracle, yes? But a really good man is not afraid of Elsa . . .

EDMUND: I'm not afraid of you.

ELSA: I think so.

EDMUND: Where's Otto?

ELSA: You are afraid great Otto might find us together so and kill you? He might do so. But now is not possible.

EDMUND: What have you done with Otto?

*(ELSA laughs.)*

ELSA: My English is not so good. Shall I draw it on the wall, what I have done with Otto?

EDMUND: Damn it, where is he?

ELSA: I show you. My God I show you.

*(She flings back the curtain. In the alcove is a low bed and on the bed is OTTO, open-mouthed, snoring, his head thrown back and his body twisted as if his back had been broken. The blankets have fallen away to reveal the expanse of OTTO between the round-necked vest rolled up about his chest and the long pants pulled down past his navel. EDMUND starts back.)*

He will not wake. He is drunk. He is in pig-sleep like dead.



I have put such a spell of deep sleep upon him. See.  
(*She prods him.*)

Come and have a look at him. Come . . .  
(*EDMUND approaches slowly. OTTO stirs.*)

Ha, you jump like a rabbit.

EDMUND: I really don't see any point is served by—

ELSA: You don't think is funny, this animal?

EDMUND: Frankly, no.

ELSA: Why? You worry to be such a thing yourself one day?

EDMUND: I think not.

ELSA: Why you think not? He is an animal. I am an animal. Even good Mr Edmund is an animal. Wow, wow, wow! Isn't it?

(*She rolls on the tomb.*)

We are two beasts fallen into a pit and we climb always on each other to get out. But take care, Mr good Edmund when you stretch out your hand, that we do not pull you in as well. Or my brother, he is a bad one too, he may push you in from behind. Look, look!

(*She points behind him. He turns quickly. She laughs.*)

ELSA: You are too slow. He went again while you turned your head.

EDMUND: I really must go. If Otto finds me here—

ELSA: Why are you so cruel to your eyes to look only on what is ugly? See, look at me. So pretty.

(*She spreads out her nightgown.*)

EDMUND: I really must—

ELSA: You think I am a bad woman?

EDMUND: I know nothing about you.

ELSA: Oh, oh, oh! You know about me that this, and this—

(*She touches her breasts.*)

EDMUND: Please— don't—

ELSA: I think one day I shall come to you, yes. I come to your house in London and stay with you. Would you like that?

EDMUND: No, I—

ELSA: Yes, you are afraid. Here, you can touch me. It is only a woman's hand. A little, little hand. Here, touch it, touch it.

(*She extends her hand and EDMUND backs away.*)

You despise me.

EDMUND: Of course I don't.

(*He takes her hand. She places it on her breast. She laughs triumphantly.*)

ELSA: There! Now I have burnt your hand! Look—and you will see a great big blister. Now you must cut off your hand like the poor monk in the story.

EDMUND: Where do you come from?

ELSA: Where do you come from, Elsa?

EDMUND: Where do you come from, Elsa.

(*She stretches out on the tomb and draws him down to kneel beside her.*)

ELSA: I tell you a story. Since six years we are coming from Russia. My father is very grand, very much known, but he cannot like Russia because we are Jews. So one day he takes us through a deep, dark forest, and we walk and walk . . . And suddenly there are towers, and big lights looking for us, and we run and run and they are shooting at us . . .

EDMUND: Where is your father now?

ELSA: He is nowhere. He is dead. There was a bullet in his stomach.

(*Pause. She holds up her hand.*)

You see these rings? These are big diamonds. My father gives them so we are never poor. But I keep them to remember.

EDMUND: Elsa, I'm sorry—

ELSA: You must not be sorry. Is not good. Look at me, I am sorry for all the world since I was born. Is like a disease. It helps no one.

(*She kneels up on the tomb.*)

But not to think such sad things. See pretty things, so pretty. You like to see Elsa now?

(*She begins to lower her nightdress.*)

EDMUND: No, no, no, stop.

ELSA: You are the poor monk in the story, Mr Edmund. You cut off your hand. So— (*she gets up*) I will sleep, so close, so warm, with him! Two animals, in our little hole. Wow, wow, wow, isn't it. And you shall stay and watch us, so. And watch and watch and watch. Sssh . . .

(*She looks quietly at him for a moment. Then she draws her knees up, falls down beside OTTO and closes her eyes. OTTO moves slumbrously at her contact; and for a moment the two bodies quiver and shift in sympathy before settling down conjoined, her head against his neck, her knees within his knees, her head in his hand. EDMUND stares at them for a long time. He sleeps.*)

The lights fade.

## ACT ONE Scene Six

The workshop and lawn.

(*Dawn filters in through the cobwebbed skylight. DAVID creeps through the workshop door, looks up at ELSA and OTTO asleep in the bed, then down at EDMUND, asleep in a corner near them. It is morning.*)

DAVID: So you have discovered the love birds!

(*EDMUND wakes with a jolt.*)

They sleep well, don't they? You could watch them all night. You think my sister is beautiful?

(*EDMUND jumps to his feet.*)

EDMUND: I've no opinion on the matter. Let me out, please.

DAVID: But she suits my Lord Otto, this you agree.

EDMUND: It's nothing to do with me.

DAVID: Oh, how can you say? My sister, your brother, we are almost relations.

EDMUND: Levkin, I've no intention of discussing my brother's affairs with you.

DAVID: Affair! Affair! And I am pronounced Lyevekin, Lyevekin. Little lion, you may say, for a lion is in Russian you see lyeve . . .

(*EDMUND pushes past him to the door and goes outside. DAVID follows him.*)

Isn't it a beautiful day, Mr Edmund? I love these mornings when I come over to wake them. On such a morning I remember the philosopher who says it is the greatest crime of mankind, to ignore the beauty of the world.

EDMUND: Clear off.

DAVID: No, don't go. May I show you my paintings, Mr Edmund? You see, really I am a painter, I despise all these stones. And when you are back in London you will talk to some men about my paintings—

EDMUND: I don't know what your game is, but I'd advise you to practise keeping your mouth shut or you might find yourself in trouble. Particularly as I don't suppose you've got a British passport. There are certain things we don't like in this country, and blackmail is one of them—as you'll doubtless find out when you've lived here a little longer—

(*DAVID, surprisingly, suddenly leaps into the air with a wild burst of laughter.*)

DAVID: I levitate, I levitate! Lived here a little longer! Oh, I can't bear it! Which one, which one?

EDMUND: Which what?

DAVID: Which story did she tell you? The swimming the



river story, or the aeroplane story, or the tunnel story—

EDMUND: She said you came through the forest—

DAVID: And the towers and the searchlights and our poor old father who was hit by a bullet so that he died? The stomach was it, or the kidney?

EDMUND: The stomach.

DAVID: Sometimes one, sometimes the other. And the rings, did she show you the rings with the big diamonds?

EDMUND: Yes.

DAVID: (*roaring with laughter*) Oh she is funny. Her mind is a cinema. Poor Mr Edmund, I regret our father is not the grand man but a merchant of furs living in Golders Green where we were born. And very much alive he is too, making his money.

EDMUND: And the rings?

DAVID: Glass, Mr Edmund. She bought them for a few shillings. So you see, I am as British as you are, so now we can be friends again.

EDMUND: Does she— does she *believe* these things happened?

DAVID: Well, you see, she is a little— not crazy, quite— but she imagines, yes. She has what we call Polizeiangst. She thinks always she is persecuted. She is troubled always with being a Jew, and all that is happening in all the world to Jews she thinks is happening to her.

EDMUND: Poor child . . .

DAVID: And she is fallen, Mr Edmund, since she was very young she is fallen. So many men she's had. That is what my Lord Otto likes. That she is crazed and that she is a prostitute. And she likes him because he is a monster— a gorilla!

EDMUND: I don't think you should be talking about your master in this way—

DAVID: You see, there are two kinds of Jew, Mr Edmund, the Jews that suffer and the Jews that succeed, the light Jews and the dark Jews. She is a dark Jew; she is one big memory of all the ones who suffer and die. So she must suffer too; and she will die young, I do fear it.

EDMUND: And you are a light Jew?

DAVID: Of course. I will work, I will succeed in art or in business—perhaps in art business, it makes no difference, I will earn enormous money and I will not remember. Nothing. I levitate myself into the world of light. I let the dark ones take care of the other side of the business. (*with a gesture towards the workshop.*)

EDMUND: (*grimly*) How long has that been going on?

DAVID: Oh, months, a year—since we are here.

EDMUND: Does anyone know except you?

DAVID: And you, Mr Edmund.

EDMUND: And me.

(*DAVID shakes his head.*)

Then I suggest we keep it that way.

(*DAVID puts his finger to his lips.*)

DAVID: Not to worry. It is beautiful, beautiful. And they do not make babies because my sister cannot. Good morning . . .

(*He slips into the workshop.*)

EDMUND: Flora! (*he looks at his watch*) Oh God! It's after ten o'clock.

(*He dashes into the kitchen.*)

#### ACT ONE Scene Seven

(*In the kitchen MAGGIE is working quietly as usual, altering a dress. She looks up as EDMUND bursts in and makes for the inner door.*)

MAGGIE: (*quietly*) She's gone.

(*EDMUND stops, his hand on the door. This time he says nothing. He goes back to the table and looks blankly at*

*her. She continues with her work.*)

EDMUND: Gone where?

MAGGIE: London.

EDMUND: But she wanted to see me!

MAGGIE: She asked where you were, but of course I couldn't tell her.

EDMUND: She must have known I'd be back—

MAGGIE: She didn't know anything. She waited till half past nine. Then she caught the ten o'clock train.

(*EDMUND looks at his watch.*)

It left five minutes ago.

(*EDMUND sits down.*)

EDMUND: Oh, Maggie . . . Was she very upset with me?

MAGGIE: I don't think she had much room left to be upset with you.

EDMUND: What has she gone to London for?

MAGGIE: To have it seen to.

EDMUND: What?

MAGGIE: The baby, of course.

EDMUND: What do you mean by 'seen to'?

MAGGIE: Removed.

EDMUND: Oh, my God . . .

(*He puts his hands to his face. MAGGIE watches him dispassionately.*)

How long have you known about it?

MAGGIE: Does it matter?

EDMUND: (*jealously*) But why did she tell you?

MAGGIE: Who else could she tell?

EDMUND: Her parents, for God's sake!

MAGGIE: Don't be ridiculous. She needed help.

EDMUND: But if only she'd waited—

MAGGIE: She needed money.

EDMUND: And you lent it to her?

MAGGIE: Yes.

EDMUND: For an abortion!

MAGGIE: Yes.

EDMUND: (*jumping up*) But that's monstrous. Wicked.

MAGGIE: You mean it's illegal.

EDMUND: No, wicked!

(*MAGGIE goes on sewing calmly.*)

EDMUND: And put that damned stuff down and stop behaving as though it happened every day.

MAGGIE: I don't see much point in getting worked up now.

EDMUND: You may not, but I do— I'm not just a servant, you know, I'm her uncle!

MAGGIE: You should have thought of that two hours ago.

EDMUND: My God, do you know what you've done? You've sent her off to kill a child!

MAGGIE: I didn't send her.

EDMUND: You let her go.

MAGGIE: I couldn't stop her either. I'm a servant.

(*Pause. EDMUND sits down.*)

EDMUND: Do you know where she's gone to in London?

MAGGIE: No.

EDMUND: We must do something—

MAGGIE: What do you suggest?

EDMUND: Otto must bear a great deal of the blame for this— terrible thing.

MAGGIE: How do you work that out?

EDMUND: He's the head of the house, isn't he? Didn't I say yesterday this was no atmosphere for a young girl to be brought up in, and who's responsible for it? Well, we won't go into that. One thing's certain: he's got to be brought to his senses; he's got to be told.

MAGGIE: No!

EDMUND: Why not?

MAGGIE: You don't know everything—

EDMUND: I know enough, don't you worry about that. And



my God, it's time Otto learnt something about what's happening in this house!

MAGGIE: Edmund, don't be a fool . . .

(EDMUND strides out, slamming the door, and makes for the workshop.)

## ACT ONE Scene Eight

(The lawn and workshop.)

OTTO is heaving himself out of bed in the workshop, with DAVID fussing round him. EDMUND is on his way across the lawn.)

DAVID: And how are we this morning, my Lord? Ready for a hearty breakfast?

OTTO: Piss off, you tick.

(EDMUND knocks on the workshop door.)

EDMUND (calling): Otto! Otto!

(DAVID hurries out and meets EDMUND by the door, as OTTO shambles off to get some water.)

DAVID: I should keep clear, Mr Edmund. The black dog is on his shoulder this morning. Always after—you know what—the black dog sits on his shoulder.

EDMUND: Yes, well when I want your advice I'll ask for it.

(DAVID shrugs.)

Tell me, is, erm—?

DAVID: She is gone, never fear.

EDMUND: Ah. Gone where?

DAVID: How do I know? Out of the window? She is like the—how do you call it? The wet dream; suddenly the sun comes out and—

EDMUND: Damn you, Levkin, get out of my sight.

(DAVID bows and grins, motioning EDMUND to the workshop door, then skips off out of sight behind the house, vastly amused. EDMUND goes in, as OTTO reappears with a jug of water.)

EDMUND: Otto, I have a few words to say to you.

(OTTO looks at him wearily and sits on the tomb with the jug, a glass and a bottle of whisky.)

OTTO: Come in, Ed.

(EDMUND moves immediately into the attack.)

EDMUND: It's time we had a serious talk—

(OTTO pours out a glass of whisky.)

For God's sake, you're not drinking already.

OTTO: Scourge me, Ed, let me have it, I deserve it.

EDMUND: You might at least wait till after breakfast.

OTTO: This is breakfast.

(He puts down the bottle and picks up the water jug, looking into it morosely.)

EDMUND: Otto, this can't go on! You've got to come to your senses. I've just learnt of a most shocking thing, and I lay the blame entirely at your door, entirely. That poor child—

OTTO: I know, Ed, I know.

EDMUND: You know? What do you know?

OTTO: I know that you know.

EDMUND: About—?

OTTO: Elsa, Elsa. . . ! My malin genie. . . .

EDMUND: I'm not talking about Elsa!

OTTO: What else is there to talk about? Give it to me, Ed, knock some sense into my head for the love of God. Give me the strength to do something. The awful thing is I feel so powerless! I want to smash something, kill somebody—myself preferably, but I haven't got the guts. . . .

EDMUND: There's no need to be melodramatic.

OTTO: I'm a passionate man. I can't help it.

EDMUND: Yes. . . . Well—

(OTTO pours water into his glass.)

OTTO: Look at this water—it's full of beasties. I wonder if the whisky'll hurt them.

(He begins to fish the creatures out with his finger.)

EDMUND: Otto—

OTTO: I dreamt last night there was a huge snake in the house. I could hear it slithering after me. I ran to the telephone to call the police, but the dial was all covered with insects—beetles and woodlice—

EDMUND: Otto, I—

OTTO: The woodlice were the kind that roll up. . . .

EDMUND: Otto, if you don't mind I—

OTTO: What do you think of her?

EDMUND: Who?

OTTO: Elsa.

EDMUND: (stiffly) I'm not qualified to give an opinion.

OTTO: Oh, come off it, Ed, you saw her didn't you?

EDMUND: Did she tell you?

OTTO: Good Lord, we don't talk to each other.

EDMUND: I suppose not.

OTTO: Ed, it wasn't Isabel put you on to her?

EDMUND: No, no, I met her on the lawn last night. She was looking for worms.

OTTO: That's as logical as anything else.

EDMUND: We had a—talk.

OTTO: Congratulations. What did you make of her?

EDMUND: She is a little—odd, isn't she?

OTTO: You mean potty?

EDMUND (the memory affecting him): She said she was a witch. . . .

OTTO: My word, you had quite a soiree, didn't you?

EDMUND (snapping out of it): Look, I didn't come here to talk about Elsa—

OTTO: No, no—but she is fascinating, don't you think?

EDMUND: I'm only too aware it's none of my business—

OTTO: Stupid question. You think she's a whore. You're right. You think I should get rid of her. Right again, but I can't.

EDMUND: Have you tried?

OTTO: Course I've bloody tried! When Lydia was dying I tried. If you can't give up a whore when your mother's dying. . . . But you see, she's so good.

(He finds the whisky bottle and tops up the glass.)

EDMUND (astounded): Good?

OTTO: In bed. . . .

(EDMUND jumps up impatiently.)

Ed, I want to tell you something: before Elsa I'd never in my life had a completely satisfying sexual experience. I know that kind of thing doesn't bother you, but do you understand?

EDMUND (avoiding OTTO's eyes): I can't say I do. I should have thought your marriage—

OTTO: Oh, I tried with Isabel, but the more I tried the more bestial she made me feel. It was like some obscene operation done in front of a mirror.

EDMUND: Yes, yes, but do we have to—

OTTO: We're in this together, Ed. Mother fixation, that's what we've got. The old oedipal thing.

EDMUND: Oh, really Otto!

OTTO: God, we're bloody puritans, you and I—I lumbered with it, the pair of us. Deep down, I've always felt that sex was something bad. Then Elsa came along, and it was a revelation—like nothing I'd ever known.

(EDMUND turns away.)

There was no time for guilt, not with her. She made me feel my body was—angelic. Everything we did was beautiful. Can you understand that?

(EDMUND doesn't answer.)

It was a miracle. At first. Then we heard Lydia was dying, and it all started to go wrong. The poison got in again. I



wanted to disown my body. All the old guilt came galloping back. . . . I tried to break it off, but it was no good. Then I started to worry about the others—Flora particularly. I got scared stiff she'd find out—it could do such awful damage.

EDMUND (*grimly*): Flora's been damaged already.

OTTO (*startled*): Does she know?

EDMUND: She needs someone to look after her. She needs a father.

OTTO (*groaning*): I know, I know. . . .

(EDMUND *turns on him*.)

EDMUND: Then pull yourself together!

OTTO: I can't, Ed—

EDMUND: There *is* such a thing as self control!

OTTO: No, no, no, you can't stick your civilised solutions on to this. I'm in something that's both essential and impossible, and I can't get out! It's like some awful machine, and it's eating me up, grinding my guts out. . . . If only I could suffer it simply, like an animal—but I can't even do that! I tell you, Ed, it's beginning to frighten me, because sometimes I see with awful clarity the only way out—to take this demon that's possessed me, and crush it between my hands.

(*He is looking at the bed, shaking, his eyes goggling, his mouth pullulating in his face like a live animal.*)

EDMUND: Why don't you just get rid of her? Tell her to pack her bags! Get that brother of hers to take her away.

OTTO: I can't just kick her out, Ed. She loves me.

EDMUND (*amazed*): What!

OTTO: She hasn't got anyone else. Perhaps the only thing she *can* love is a sort of Caliban like me. Anyway she does. I'm father, brother, son and lover to her. And I can't bear her tears. . . .

EDMUND: But there are other people to be considered, Otto, innocent people—

OTTO (*with disarming sincerity*): I agree!

EDMUND: Yes! And I don't think *anything* can be done while the home is filled with this deception. I'm sorry, but I've made up my mind: I shall have to tell Isabel.

OTTO: You will?

EDMUND: Yes. It's an impossible position for her, poor dear, trying to lead a decent life with this—mockery going on behind her back. I must help her. It may be painful at first, but in the long run it will be for her good.

OTTO: Thank God.

EDMUND (*amazed*): You mean you want me to?

OTTO: Yes. Yes! Let's have it out. As a matter of fact I was going to ask you to do just that. Explain to her, Ed. She respects you. Make her understand.

EDMUND: I can't promise to do that.

OTTO: At least point out to her that I'm not an absolute monster. You're a good man, Ed. I know you'll do your best for me. I feel as if a great weight's been lifted. . . .

EDMUND: Don't misunderstand me, Otto. It's not my idea to act as your advocate.

OTTO: No, no, God forbid. Put it to her honestly. Give her the facts—

EDMUND: If you don't mind I'd prefer to do this in my own way. I'd rather talk in—well, general terms.

OTTO: General terms, that's it, you talk in general terms. You're so good at talking in general terms.

EDMUND: The details are unimportant.

OTTO: Naturally. Say no more. I rely on you.

(OTTO *holds out his hand*.)

EDMUND *grasps it*.)

EDMUND: Yes. Well. . . .

OTTO: Do it gently, Ed. I mean—for both our sakes.

EDMUND (*squeezing his hand*): Of course.

(*He goes to the door, opens it and stands for a moment looking at the house.*)

(*Quietly, to himself.*) Poor, sweet Isabel. The last one left. 'To be good is just never to lose it. . . .'

OTTO: What was that?

EDMUND: Nothing. I was remembering what you said about innocence. . . .

(*He goes.*)

## ACT ONE Scene Nine

(*Isabel's room. It is dusk. The room is lit only by the dusk light and by the fire, which is burning fiercely.*)

ISABEL *is standing on a low stool in the firelight. She is wearing a long, rather beautiful loose-sleeved gown; her arms are raised, as though for a blessing or a spell. In front of her kneels* MAGGIE, *gazing up at her.*)

MAGGIE: Is it free enough for you?

ISABEL: Yes, I think so.

MAGGIE: You can put them down now.

(ISABEL *lowers her arms*.)

It still needs taking in a little.

ISABEL: As you think. . . .

MAGGIE: Can I have the light on, please?

(ISABEL *gestures to the lamp. MAGGIE switches it on, then makes adjustments to the dress as ISABEL talks.*)

ISABEL: Poor Maggie, you're doing this on sufferance, aren't you? It hurts you to see me in Lydia's clothes. Does it surprise you that I should want to wear anything of hers? It does me, I must admit. But don't worry, this is all. Everything else I want out of the house. Do you understand?

MAGGIE: I'll get rid of them. There are people in the town who *need* clothes.

ISABEL: Your suppliants. All right. As long as they go. I want that room cleared, stripped bare. Then I think we'll have it redecorated. We'll have a William Morris wallpaper. God, how she'd have hated that.

(MAGGIE *works quietly*.)

ISABEL: Everyone's very quiet today. I wonder where Edmund is. . . .

MAGGIE: He went into the wood.

ISABEL: Nice for him. This is the man who yesterday couldn't get away fast enough; he had his own troubles, he said. They'll be spiritual ones, of course, nothing of the flesh. Can't you just see him crashing through the trees, fighting great battles within himself like a twentieth-century Luther, reaching great decisions—to carry on as before.

(*She laughs.*)

I wish you'd make a little conversation now and then, Maggie. Why do you never say anything? Perhaps you're too honest to be able to open your mouth. Yet I've heard you in Lydia's room, talk, talk, talk, talk halfway into the night. You miss her, don't you? But you're clever; you'll find some way of not being too unhappy. I admire you for that.

(*She looks down at MAGGIE.*)

Oh, you're a good woman, Maggie. So good, you probably don't even think of yourself as good, unlike Edmund. What makes you like that? Lack of ambition, lack of desire? Lack of opportunity? How far down does it go, do you know? If I were to dig down with a knife, at what point would you bare your teeth?

(*Pause.*)

That's it, let me talk and talk. One day I'll have nothing left to say, and I'll drop dead at your feet; and you'll sweep me up with your dustpan and brush.

MAGGIE: I'm sorry, but I've never known a discussion of goodness to be in any way helpful. If you'll take it off



I'll finish it for you.

ISABEL: No, I feel like wearing it for a while.

MAGGIE: Would you like some coffee?

ISABEL: How do you do it, Maggie? If I turned the other cheek as you do, it would seem like an act of aggression.

MAGGIE: All I had in mind was whether you'd like some coffee.

ISABEL: I know. . . . Thanks, Maggie, I would. Thank you. (MAGGIE goes out. ISABEL goes to the gramophone and switches it on to a record already on the turntable; then to the window, where she stands looking out. Wagner. There is a knock at the door.)

Come in, Edmund.

(EDMUND enters.)

EDMUND: Isabel, do you think I might have a word with you?

ISABEL (lightly): I should think so.

EDMUND: There's something rather serious I want to talk to you about.

ISABEL: That's hardly a novelty, but do come in.

EDMUND: Thank you.

(EDMUND is a little disconcerted by her almost bantering tone.)

ISABEL: So you decided not to leave us after all.

EDMUND: Well, no actually I. . . .

ISABEL: You thought you'd do a little poking around instead, well, I daresay it makes a nice change from whatever you do with yourself in London. Have you uncovered the body yet?

EDMUND: What on earth are you talking about?

ISABEL: You're like the Inspector in one of those boring detective novels, forever popping up to have a word with someone. But of course, that's what you were doing with Otto so early this morning; you'd gone over to borrow his old fawn raincoat.

EDMUND: How did you know I was there?

ISABEL: I hope you haven't let anyone leave the building.

EDMUND (ruefully): Actually I have.

ISABEL: That was careless of you.

(ISABEL pokes the fire.)

And how much has our Inspector uncovered?

EDMUND: Everything, I should think.

ISABEL: Oh, not everything, I'm sure not everything. But keep on poking. It'll all come up to the surface in its own good time, stinking like mad.

EDMUND: Isabel, I think you'd better sit down. I have something rather distressing to tell you.

ISABEL: I think you'd better sit down, you know. I can't make sensible conversation while I'm wondering which piece of furniture you're about to smash.

EDMUND: Very well.

(He picks up a cushion.)

ISABEL: And please leave the cushions where they are.

(He sits, throwing the cushion back on the chair.)

Now, what are we being so serious about?

(Pause. EDMUND mops his brow. The heat from the fire is stifling.)

EDMUND: Isabel, do you think we could have the gramophone off?

(ISABEL gives him a look, rises and switches off the gramophone.)

EDMUND: And why don't you close the curtains and put some more lights on?

ISABEL: Why do you always want to change everything in here? When the curtains are closed you want them open, when they're open you want them closed, I like it like this, now enough of it.

EDMUND (rising): I think I'd better come back another time. . . .

ISABEL: Don't be silly, Edmund, you mustn't mind me. Sit down, do.

(EDMUND sits down.)

Now, what is it? Tell me all about it.

(Slight pause.)

EDMUND: Isabel, I'd like you to know that, in general, I do appreciate your situation.

ISABEL (ironically): Really?

EDMUND: I know you've had a difficult life with Otto. And may I say that I think you've behaved like an angel.

ISABEL (sarcastically): Good heavens. . . .

EDMUND: A husband and a wife, now that is a thing—

ISABEL: A thing? Don't you mean two things?

EDMUND: I mean that marriage is—

ISABEL: An institution—

EDMUND: An institution—

ISABEL: A sacred institution—

EDMUND: Isabel, please be serious. What I have to say concerns you rather deeply. I've just had a very frank talk with Otto—

ISABEL: About what you saw in the workshop last night.

(Pause.)

I'm sorry. Did you want to tell me about it yourself?

EDMUND: You know?

ISABEL: Of course I know. Only someone as stupid as Otto wouldn't realise.

EDMUND: Do you know everything?

ISABEL: One can never be certain, can one? I saw you passing the time of—night with the lady, of course. Honestly, it's pathetic; if Otto wants to keep it a dark secret he might at least break her of the habit of moaning all over the lawn.

EDMUND: How long have you known?

ISABEL: Oh, ages, from the start. They make so much noise, for one thing.

EDMUND: Noise?

ISABEL: Yes, noise! Racket, din. You'd be surprised how they romp about. I must say I was surprised. He never barked like a dog with me, he was positively classical. Mais, c'est un vrai bordel la-bas. Not that I mind what people do, as long as they keep it to themselves. I once read about a man who couldn't make love to his wife unless he had her tied up in brown paper, like a parcel. Good luck to them. But yapping all night practically under one's window is another matter.

EDMUND: Poor Isabel, how you must have suffered. But thank God it's all in the open now. I'll say this for Otto, he hasn't enjoyed the deception.

ISABEL: Nonsense. He hasn't the least objection to deception. What he doesn't enjoy is being found out. But has he really sent you as an emissary? What are you supposed to achieve?

EDMUND: I'm sorry, I'm obviously being very clumsy. He didn't send me, it was my idea.

ISABEL: And he agreed to it?

EDMUND: Yes. What he wants, I think, is to feel that we can be rational about the situation, that it's possible to talk about it, at least, without getting into a frenzy. I must say I was very impressed by his—remorse. I do think he honestly wants to get out of the thing.

ISABEL: He doesn't want to get out of it, he wants to feel more comfortable staying in it. He wants you to square me so that he can stop feeling guilty. As for getting in a frenzy, who's likely to, except him? He provides all the frenzies in this house. And what do you mean by 'we' can be rational, who's 'we'? The fact that Otto and his lady put on a show for you last night doesn't mean club membership, you know.

EDMUND: Isabel, I realise how deeply hurt you must be.



But if you could try to take the broad view, try to avoid bitterness—

ISABEL: Edmund, don't exasperate me to death! And get your big feet out of the way. I don't give a damn where, how or with whom Otto gets his sexual pleasures, is that broad enough for you? I simply wish they could be reasonably quiet and not keep us all awake at nights with their stray dog antics, him and that—demented tragedy queen. For God's sake, the world is full of quiet, sane little typists just dying to have an affaire with an *artist*. Why pick this second-hand Ophelia? He's had a succession of pretty apprentices for that matter, what was wrong with *them*?

EDMUND: Isabel, I think you're going too far—!

ISABEL: Too far for *you*. Just because you've no use for sex you think everyone else is monks and nuns. Except in marriage which is nice and simple and tidy with no loose ends to trip over. Well I'm sorry, Edmund, but this is not last week's issue of 'True Romance', to read with your Ovaltine at night—it's life, about which you know very little.

(*She flings a large log on to the fire.*)

EDMUND (*turning away and mopping his brow*): Isabel, you really ought to get a fireguard, you know. . . .

ISABEL (*fiercely*): Shall I show you something? Look!

(*She puts out her hand.*)

EDMUND: What?

ISABEL: *There, there.*

EDMUND: What? The burn?

ISABEL: Are you blind? Anyone can see that's not a burn. Take it, feel it.

(*EDMUND takes her hand.*)

EDMUND: What, then. . . ?

(*ISABEL'S fingers close on EDMUND'S*)

ISABEL: Otto did that with a chisel. I'll bear the mark till I'm dead. And my God it wasn't the only time.

EDMUND: He struck you? Oh, my God. . . .

(*He sits down, disgusted.*)

ISABEL: You know nothing, Edmund, nothing. . . . It's not your fault, you do your best, I'm sure. Just don't come asking me to play the wronged but forgiving wife. . . .

(*She stands now by the window, an indistinct shape against the darkening sky. EDMUND'S figure dances in the firelight. A pause.*)

Poor Edmund. You really must read a history of the Crusades one day. They never did work, you know.

EDMUND: I don't understand. . . . Surely you don't mean to leave things as they are?

ISABEL: With your permission. Though it's none of your business actually, is it?

EDMUND: I can't agree. As the only sane person in this house I think it's very much my business.

ISABEL: So what do you intend to do? Have us all certified?

EDMUND (*rising, with sudden vehemence*): Very well . . . I was hoping to spare you this. But you and Otto are so obsessed with yourselves that you've apparently forgotten that you're also parents—that you have an impressionable young girl in the house who has to breathe this—poisonous atmosphere. No man is an island, Isabel—

ISABEL: You ought to be on the stage, you really ought—(*She glares at him crazily.*)

EDMUND (*his voice rising*): Kindly listen to me! I said no man is an island—

ISABEL (*beginning to pace the room*): And no woman is, either—

EDMUND: Isabel, I insist that you listen to me seriously! When you hear what I have to say I doubt if you'll be able to take things so calmly—

ISABEL (*rounding on him*): Calmly! Is one calm on the

rack? Is one calm in the fire? Oh you fool, you fool. . . . (*She suddenly crumples up and falls in a moaning heap on the floor at his feet.*)

EDMUND: Isabel!

ISABEL: I want to die! Kill me, I want to die. . . .

EDMUND: What is it? Are you in pain?

ISABEL: Yes, I'm in pain, my God. . . .

EDMUND: Then what, what. . . ?

ISABEL: Can't you see? Isn't it written on my face, on my hands, on the walls of this room?

EDMUND: I don't understand—

ISABEL: I'm in love, love, love. . . .

EDMUND (*hopefully*): Otto. . . ?

ISABEL: Oh, you idiot . . . David, David. . . .

EDMUND: Levkin. . . ?

(*ISABEL moans.*)

Isabel, for God's sake pull yourself together—not Levkin. . . .

ISABEL: He's like an angel. He's bewitched me!

EDMUND: If you mean some sort of sexual attraction—

ISABEL: 'Sexual attraction!' How can you be so obtuse, so crude. . . . I love him, I want him, it's killing me, I want him. . . .

EDMUND (*soothingly*): Please be calm! Let's talk about it sensibly—

ISABEL: Oh, go away, you don't understand. . . .

EDMUND: How long have you—felt this?

ISABEL: You sound like the family doctor! Please leave me!

EDMUND: Really, Isabel, it can't last—it's only an infatuation—

ISABEL (*with sudden strength*): Don't you understand, we're in the pockets of those changelings—Otto and I—both of us! You're outside the charmed circle—you don't know what it's like!

(*Pause.*)

EDMUND (*defeated*): Yes. Outside. . . .

(*EDMUND sits down heavily. ISABEL sighs.*)

ISABEL: I'm sorry, Edmund. You're simply out of your depth here. . . .

EDMUND: If only I could help. . . . I'm so tired of being outside. . . .

(*ISABEL rises and moves slowly towards him.*)

(*Putting his head in her hands.*) Can't I do anything. . . .

ISABEL: Perhaps you can. . . .

(*She stands over him and begins to undo her dress, pulling it apart to expose her breasts.*)

You're a good man, Edmund. I'm going through hell. Comfort me. Comfort me.

(*EDMUND looks up. He jumps to his feet and after a pause draws her dress together again, his hands over hers.*)

*There is a knock and the immediate entry of MAGGIE with a coffee tray. MAGGIE stops abruptly. All three seem slightly dazed.*)

MAGGIE: I'll bring another cup.

CURTAIN

## ACT TWO Scene Ten

(*The kitchen. It is late afternoon, a few days later, and the weather has now broken. EDMUND is sitting at the table. He is peeling an orange, carefully, with a knife. On the table in front of him is a little pile of boxwood blocks. He sighs. MAGGIE comes into the kitchen from the house. EDMUND keeps his eyes down. MAGGIE, a bottle of Marsala in her hand, gives him only a passing glance; she goes to the chopping-board, lays on it some slabs of meat, picks up a rolling-pin, and suddenly begins to belabour it. Perhaps she is using no more force than is necessary, but EDMUND,*



after cringing at the first blow, gets to his feet and goes to the window. As he does so DAVID appears in the direction of the workshop. On seeing EDMUND he leaps high into the air as though attempting to fly, laughing hugely but silently, and disappears again. EDMUND looks back into the kitchen; MAGGIE is still there, pouring Marsala over the meat which she has put in a dish. He takes a step back inside.)

EDMUND (tentatively): Maggie. . . .

MAGGIE: Yes?

EDMUND (after a pause, lamely): It's raining.

MAGGIE: On washday it always rains. . . .

(She lifts a large washing basket on to the table. It knocks into some pieces of wood.)

What are those things?

EDMUND: I found them in the cellar. They're some of my father's old boxwood blocks.

MAGGIE: Oh. . . .

(She lowers the drying rail and begins to take the garments—Otto's underclothes—out of the basket, stretch them into shape and hang them over the rail.)

EDMUND: No one ever switches lights on in this house. Lydia's influence still, I suppose. God, why did she have to be so mean?

(He switches the light on. MAGGIE looks up for a moment, then carries on hanging a pair of Otto's long pants. EDMUND moons about.)

Were you ever taller than me?

MAGGIE: No. Why?

EDMUND: I didn't think you could have been. Yet I remember you as distinctly taller. I can remember looking up.

MAGGIE: It was one of the others.

EDMUND: No, I'm sure it was you.

MAGGIE: Then I must have been standing on a chair.

(Pause.)

EDMUND: Any news of Flora?

MAGGIE: No.

EDMUND (pacing to the window): I hope to God she's all right. . . .

MAGGIE: All we can do is wait.

EDMUND: Where's Otto?

MAGGIE: He went to the slate quarries. It will give me a chance to clean the workshop. . . .

EDMUND: Always cleaning, cleaning, eh Maggie?

MAGGIE: Someone has to do it.

(She hoists up the drying rail. Otto's garments sway grotesquely.)

EDMUND: I don't know how you've stuck it. . . .

MAGGIE: Stuck what?

EDMUND: Everything. Washing Otto's underclothes, for God's sake! It's ludicrous for you to have to do that.

(MAGGIE says nothing but finishes fastening up the drying rail.)

Why, Maggie? For goodness sake, why have you stuck it? (She glances at him, then scoops the orange peel deftly with one hand off the table into the other, lifts the lid of the range and drops it in.)

MAGGIE: It started with a dream, as I told you. And I stayed out of—habit; fear; love. . . . It's easy enough to find reasons for not changing one's situation.

(MAGGIE sits down at the table, where there is a workbox, scissors and the dress she is working on.)

EDMUND: But I got out. Perhaps you're more tolerant than I am.

MAGGIE: I can afford to be. It isn't my family.

EDMUND: Oh, come, Maggie, you've always been one of the family.

MAGGIE: The one who washes Otto's underclothes?

(EDMUND stares at her, seeing for a moment an aspect he has not seen before.)

EDMUND: You're a bit more than that, aren't you?

MAGGIE: I don't know.

EDMUND: Maggie, I'm afraid I was rather rude to you the other day.

MAGGIE: It's your privilege.

EDMUND: Rudeness is no one's privilege. Anyway, I apologise.

(EDMUND stares at the blocks. MAGGIE gives a long look at him, then lowers her eyes to her sewing; she begins to hum softly.)

I suppose you know more or less what's going on in this house?

MAGGIE: I think so. It would be difficult not to. Everyone shouts a good deal. I seem to hear everything. Perhaps it comes down through the pipes.

EDMUND: Hm.

MAGGIE: I'm in a privileged position, you see. Being part of the furniture.

EDMUND: I've been a complete failure ever since I got here. Even in the one place where I had a little power of good.

MAGGIE: So now what? You go away again?

EDMUND: Am I helping anyone by staying?

MAGGIE: Yourself, perhaps?

EDMUND: The question of myself doesn't arise.

MAGGIE: You will do what you want to do.

EDMUND: The trouble is, I don't really know what I want. I didn't want to come here. God knows, I didn't want to stay. Yet something holds me here. . . .

MAGGIE (begins to sing quietly):

La strada del bosco,

L'e large l'e lunga l'e stretta,

E fatt' alla barchetta—

E fatta per fare amor. . . .

EDMUND: It's a funny thing, Maggie, but in spite of everything this place still seems like a home. There's a kind of animal warmth—it's full of humours. At least it's better than my flat in London—three impersonal rooms that don't give a damn whether I go back or not, and won't recognise me if I do.

MAGGIE: You mean there's no one there to recognise you.

EDMUND: If you like. But there's something else as well—(he hesitates) Maggie. . . .

MAGGIE: Yes?

EDMUND: You see, it's Flora. I've let her down so badly. I feel responsible, somehow. Someone ought to take her away from here before the violence starts.

MAGGIE: You mean you?

EDMUND: Who else is there?

MAGGIE: Where do you think she should go?

EDMUND: Well, London. . . .

MAGGIE: Back to your three impersonal rooms?

EDMUND: Have you any other suggestions?

MAGGIE: No. No, if that is what you want. . . .

EDMUND: It's not a question of what I want, but of what's best for the child.

MAGGIE: Do you think she would agree?

EDMUND: Well, there's the difficulty. I was wondering if you could possibly have a word with her?

MAGGIE: I'm afraid I have very little influence with Flora. Besides, it's hardly my place.

EDMUND: Why not? You helped her over. . . .

MAGGIE: Because there was no one else. Which gives her another good reason for disliking me.

EDMUND: Oh, come, come. . . .

MAGGIE: You know how Lydia set us all against each other.



EDMUND: But surely not you, Maggie? You're so innocuous. . . .

MAGGIE: 'Innocuous.' Because I'm small, almost invisible, like a mouse?

EDMUND: No, no, no, I mean you're good.

MAGGIE: Like you, yes.

(EDMUND bangs two wood blocks together in sudden exasperation.)

EDMUND: Oh, stop it, Maggie!

MAGGIE: Stop what?

(He stares at her, puzzled and angry.)

FLORA: Oh, excuse me.

(FLORA bangs the door behind her with her foot. She is flushed and untidy, her hair is still up, but precariously. She carries a suitcase and is wearing a coat. She ignores EDMUND, who jumps to his feet.)

I've brought the change.

(She throws a heap of five pound notes on to the table with a rather theatrical gesture, and gives a quick defiant glance at EDMUND. MAGGIE gathers the notes up and begins to count them.)

FLORA: Count it carefully, Maggie, and make sure I haven't cheated you. Though you can't tell, can you, he wouldn't give me a receipt.

EDMUND: Flora!

FLORA: Actually I got it cheap, because the doctor was such a dear old man and I was such a dear little girl. He cried all the way to the bank, I'm sure.

EDMUND: Flora—

FLORA: Not that I'd have used her bloody money if I could have got it anywhere else.

(She brushes past EDMUND to the door.)

EDMUND: Flora, I've been so worried about you—

FLORA: Oh, are you still here? I thought your time was precious.

EDMUND: I've been waiting to see you.

FLORA (bitterly): Thanks. But you're a bit late, aren't you! (She slams out of the door and crosses the lawn to the workshop.)

EDMUND: Flora! Wait—

(He runs out after her.)

MAGGIE looks after him for a moment, then, with sudden decision, pulls open a drawer in the kitchen table and gets out a large envelope.

The lights fade in the kitchen and go up on the workshop.)

## ACT TWO Scene Eleven

(The workshop. FLORA enters from the lawn, slams down her suitcase on the tomb and takes off her coat. EDMUND is crossing the lawn.)

EDMUND: Flora!

(He hurries into the workshop.)

FLORA is lighting a cigarette.)

FLORA: Well, Uncle Edmund, what can I do for you?

EDMUND: I've been out of my mind with worry!

FLORA: You needn't have bothered. I'm quite capable of looking after myself.

EDMUND: I think it's pretty obvious that you aren't. Why didn't you tell me what you were planning to do?

FLORA: You weren't there, were you?

EDMUND: I did come, Flora, that morning, but you'd gone—

FLORA (indignantly): So you discussed me with Maggie instead!

EDMUND: We were both naturally concerned—

FLORA: Oh, naturally!

EDMUND: If you'd given me any idea—

FLORA: It doesn't matter. It wouldn't have made any difference.

EDMUND: So what's happened?

FLORA: Nothing's happened. I've had it out.

EDMUND (guilty): Oh, God. . . . There must have been some other way. We could have discussed it—

FLORA: Discussing it wouldn't have got rid of it, would it?

EDMUND: You didn't have to get rid of it—

FLORA: What do you know about it? All you ever do is talk. I was mad to expect anything else from you. (Sarcastically.) Dear, quaint old Uncle Edmund who used to help me put my dolls to bed. . . .

EDMUND: Flora, I know how hurt and ashamed you must feel, but there is a way back, my child—

FLORA: I'm not a child. And I'm not ashamed!

EDMUND: But don't you realise what you've done?

FLORA: God—Father always said you were a bit of a Puritan. Look at you! You're shocked out of your wits just because I've had an abortion. It's a good job you didn't bother to turn up that day, at least I was spared a sermon.

EDMUND: Perhaps a sermon wouldn't have done you any harm.

FLORA: You think that's the solution to everything, don't you? Well, it isn't! It's just theory. It's got nothing to do with life at all.

EDMUND: Life!

FLORA: People do what they have to do, they follow their instincts. And my instincts told me to tear that thing right out of me.

(She grinds her cigarette out on the floor with her foot.)

EDMUND: The child was innocent, Flora.

FLORA: If I'd had it I would have killed it.

EDMUND: You have killed it.

FLORA: It isn't like that! What do you know about it? It's all right for men to moralise—who ever heard of the problems of unmarried fathers? You don't know what it's like to have that thing inside you like a cancer, growing and growing, eating up your youth, your happiness, your freedom—your whole future. Who wants you when you're trailing round a beastly illegitimate child? Innocent my eye! I don't understand you. Is a cancer innocent?

(She sits down shakily and lights another cigarette. There is a pause.)

EDMUND (sighs): Well, it's done. I hope at least you had it done properly.

FLORA: Oh, the best that money can buy. Thanks to Maggie.

EDMUND: And what does this wretched Hopgood have to say about it?

FLORA: Who? Oh, dear old Charlie. I should think he'd be livid if he knew.

EDMUND: You mean you haven't told him?

FLORA: I mean he had nothing to do with it.

EDMUND: Damn it, he had everything to do with it! And he has certain responsibilities—

FLORA: Oh, stop it! Not another lecture. Don't you understand, I made him up.

EDMUND: You mean—it was someone else?

FLORA: Brilliant. Yes, Uncle Edmund, it was someone else.

EDMUND: Who, then? Flora, I want you to tell me. Whoever it was, it's time he was taught a damn good lesson.

FLORA: Well, teach away. He's on the premises.

EDMUND: On the—

FLORA: Look about you. Look about the house. Haven't you noticed? There's a pretty boy. A pretty little billy goat. . . . Can't you guess?

EDMUND: My God. . . . Not—Levkin. . . .

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# JUDI DENCH

THE STAR OF CABARET IN INTERVIEW WITH PETER ANSORGE

On stage at the Palace Theatre, Judi Dench is working intently upon a love-duet from *Cabaret*. She listens to her director's instructions, then crouches down to the floor, taking in a vast amount of air in pert preparation for the task ahead. Suddenly, she has taken off across the stage—and is rushing and leaping into the arms of her leading man. Her features flash with electric passion, as she announces to an empty auditorium the message that she has snatched from her singing; that her world seems momentarily golden and that her new lover is magnificent.

Judi Dench cools down as one begins to ask questions about her career. But a flush of brilliance, even fever, remains in her features from the rehearsal. 'Once I get tuned up I can't stop,' she explains in excitement, 'I find it difficult to sit still and to relax. I have to make myself—simply because I must.' I asked her if she was as active off-stage as she seemed to be on. 'When I'm most busy I do most things. At the moment I haven't got time to turn round really. I thought Hal Prince was out of his mind when he asked me to do *Cabaret*—out of his mind! But I'm jolly well going to have a go at it now. If you only accept the things you think you can do, or which are well within your range, you never stretch yourself at all. You might just as well play the same kind of part all your life.'

She talked about the problems faced by a straight actress, appearing in a musical for the first time: 'It's as different as chalk from cheese. A musical is singing, dancing, learning how to project a song, which is quite different from projecting a speech. A song needs more time than a speech from Shakespeare—you have to space it better. I'm inclined to hurry it a bit. Rush through to the end.' Judi Dench speaks firmly, swiftly, self-critically. Several times she returned to her fear about not being able 'to sustain a part night after night'. She found her long run in the West End as Lika in *The Promise* 'a great strain. I find this the most difficult thing of all—to give so much of myself each night.'

In *Cabaret* Judi Dench plays Sally Bowles (it's based on Christopher Isherwood's stories about Berlin in the thirties), and she has three important songs to put over



—'I've been having singing lessons for a long time. It's very much easier now, a few months ago I couldn't have spoken at the end of a day, I became so hoarse.' *Cabaret* as a musical looks longingly back to the era of the Bert Brecht/Kurt Weill Berlin operetta. Was pre-war Berlin a period which fascinated Judi Dench? 'Yes it does. Berlin in those years was decadent, rather sleazy. At the moment it's rather a fashionable period for everybody. You know the clothes now, the hairstyles, are so much of that time. Looking at my costume designs—they're not so very strange. Seven or eight years ago one would have screamed with laughter. But now one does see a lot of similarity.' Did she identify with Sally Bowles or only with the fashions? 'I do see rather a similarity between the character of Sally and the character of a girl I once played on television, in John Hopkins' quartet of plays *Talking to a Stranger*.'

At this point Judi Dench became hesitant, slightly stressed—that part in the television play had obviously meant a great deal to her: 'I found the character virtually unplayable when I first read it, but through guidance and direction I found my way through it. But it was like a maze to begin with.' In *Talking to a Stranger*, Judi Dench played a highly-strung girl of thirty verging upon the abyss of her own emancipation (here perhaps is the connection with Sally Bowles). Abandoned by her lover, she tragically re-visits her parent's suburban home one Sunday—where she attempts to make contact with a father, mother and married brother who no longer understand her. 'No character is straightforward, but this girl was different. I had to minutely describe the workings of that girl's mind to the audience, because she behaved in such an extraordinary way. I had to find out so many things about her before I could even begin—from myself and other people. By hard work one finds out most.'

Judi Dench began her career ten years ago for the Old Vic, playing Ophelia in Michael Benthall's production of *Hamlet*. 'Someone who was selecting for the Old

Judi Dench, above, as Ophelia (1957) and, left, as Juliet with John Stride as Romeo (1960), both at the Old Vic

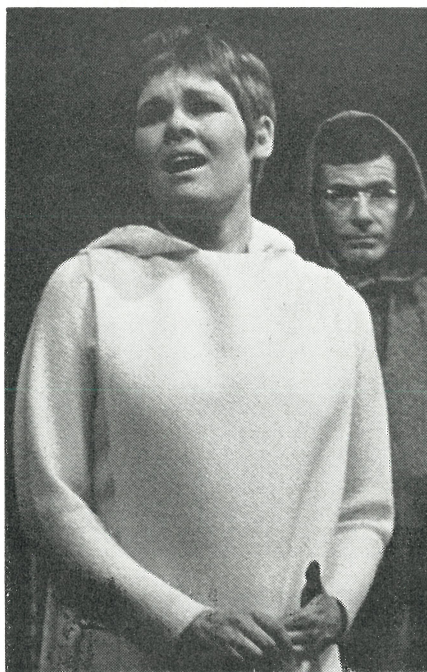


Vic saw me and I was sent along to see Michael Benthall. I auditioned for him and came back the next day, and was told by Michael, "I'm going to take the most incredible risk. I'm going to cast you as Ophelia". Judi Dench admits to being in love with 'risk, change, taking a gamble'. Equally she is attracted to 'being in a company. It's no good just appearing in a play with a lot of strangers. I love the feeling of a company, of getting to know actors and the different ways in which they function.' She wasn't satisfied with her debut as Ophelia, but she claims that she has never been completely satisfied about the way she has played any of her roles. 'I had nearly all my grounding at the Vic. It's a very solid grounding. You learn to watch other people, you learn to sustain something as we were doing five to six plays a week. It was change all the time.'

At the end of her period at the Old Vic, Judi Dench played Juliet in Franco Zeffirelli's revolutionary 1960 production of *Romeo and Juliet*. Were the cast aware during rehearsals that the production would prove a landmark? 'No, one knew that one hadn't worked with anybody like Zeffirelli before. He used to work from early in the morning to late at night. He never stopped, he has the most incredible amount of energy. He wanted Romeo and Juliet to be played as very young-looking children of fourteen and fifteen. He played on that a great deal. For the potion scene, he gave me a nightdress that was actually copied from a child's nightdress. He made me concentrate upon the childish qualities of Juliet. He made her very vulnerable, very different from any Juliet that I had ever seen.' Judi Dench's most perfect moments on the stage seem to come from her explosions of radiance, gaiety, energetic innocence.

Was she aware of any of these qualities in herself? 'I'm not aware of them at all. I think I have some energy and an ability to laugh at everything I do. As far as these indefinable things are concerned, I think it's jolly nice if people see them in me.'

After the Old Vic came seasons at the Aldwych, Stratford, Nottingham and the Oxford Playhouse. The parts she has played in these companies seem selective, liberal, intelligent. 'I've never looked back and thought that I made a mistake in choosing a particular part. Even the failures, the things for which I've got frightful notices, I still regard as having been right for me at the time. Something I had to go through at the time. I don't feel I have a career. It doesn't seem that my movements have taken on any particular pattern. I just look back on it all with enormous joy.' She has played several of her Shakespearean roles more than once. I asked whether this was deliberate—did it spring from a self-critical need to improve upon an original performance? 'Not really. I've played Isabella in *Measure for Measure* at Stratford and then again at Nottingham. That was fun because it was a completely different production, in



modern dress. Isabella is a terribly challenging part—I did want to have another shot at playing her. That difficult nun lady. I've been in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* several times, but often in different parts. I've just finished the film of the *Dream* for Peter Hall and that proved a change from the original production too. In Stratford I wore a very stiff Shakespearean costume. In the film I'm naked, practically. So that was a kind of challenge.'

I asked Judi Dench which parts she had found most rewarding at Oxford and Nottingham: 'I don't ever feel satisfied—ever. I know the things I love doing. I did *Private Lives* at Nottingham, which I simply loved. I also did *The Country Wife* there—which was beautiful. I'd like to do both of those again very much. They're both very romantic plays to do. In *Private Lives*, I used to feel that I'd gone through a great romance in one evening. *The Country Wife* was just lovely—I felt very gay. It's a long, difficult part—but I never felt tired at the end of it.'

Here Judi Dench seemed to tap the source of her talent. Talking about a part which did tire her, Lika in *The Promise*, she spoke about the necessity 'to approach the part in such a way that I would be giving a performance of that girl each evening. With every part you have to find something of the truth of the character in yourself—otherwise the performance will be of a cut-out character, suitable for the backs of Cornflakes packets. To make a girl like Lika in *The Promise* come alive you have to find the live battery of her personality. She should exist as a person inside yourself, or rather alongside you.' Judi Dench's career has been a tireless search to spark off the 'live battery' inside the characters she has played.

Judi Dench hasn't seen the New York production of *Cabaret*. 'I was going to, but then I decided against it. I wanted to approach the role from rock bottom.' She conceded that she harboured some 'fears, very natural fears' about working in the commercial theatre for one of the few times in her life. But the rehearsals of *Cabaret* had pleased her: 'It feels like a company—not a lot of people acting against each other.'

Throughout the interview she struggled to define her talent. She constantly returned to the idea of the actress or actor facing 'a blank sheet of paper which, gradually, as the work and rehearsals progress, gets filled in—the writing becomes firmer.' I asked her about the future after *Cabaret*. Naturally, a blank page—'I'd like to settle down sometimes, just stay with my family and become a bit domestic.' One feels that she might mean it. But with some confidence, I suggested that her immediate future was secure anyhow—a nice, long run in *Cabaret*. 'Steady,' said a shocked Judi Dench, 'I don't see any future beyond the first night—February 28.'

Judi Dench, top, as Saint Joan (1966) and as Isabella in *Measure for Measure* (1965) at the Nottingham Playhouse, and, left, as Lika in Arbusov's *The Promise at the Fortune* (1966)



# SHAW AND GOD

## BASIL ASHMORE ON HIS PRODUCTION OF THE ADVENTURES OF A BLACK GIRL IN SEARCH OF GOD at the Mermaid

It could be argued that George Bernard Shaw's short novel, *The Adventures of a Black Girl in Search of God*, is unlikely to fit into the theatre, since the author wrote, in the preface, that he had decided to write the piece in the form of a tale 'rather than cumber the stage with yet another theatrical comedy'.

I, myself, generally dislike novels-turned-into-plays; preferring, for example, the original stage-plays of Henry James to any one of his dramatised-novels seen over the last years. (Incidentally, it is of interest that when we presented James's own stage comedy, *The High Bid*, at the Mermaid Theatre last year it attracted a very wide and varied audience, who were by no means limited to habitual readers-of-James's-novels.) 'In which case,' you may ask, 'why on earth make a theatrical piece out of *The Black Girl* and proceed to stage it, when this goes against the author's intentions, and your own professed inclinations?'

I can only reply that few of us are consistent, that all rules can be broken when the exception appears and that this piece is the exception which proves the rule! Shaw possessed such an inherent gift for the stage that his very readable book has more the style of an extremely modernistic play than of a 'literary' novel. What is even more important is the fact that the work possesses, in essence, the very quality that makes Shaw one of the most original dramatists in the history of the theatre . . . a quality that always emerges towards the end of his major plays, when the leading characters retreat from physical action, sitting down to argue about life, art, sex, religion and any other hobby-horse upon which Shaw could uniquely prance. As the *Black Girl*'s adventures provide a splendid sequence of such discussions . . . all placed in colourfully dramatic situations, with witty Shavian dialogue, provocative arguments and precise 'stage directions' . . . I could only conclude that the basic form of a stage-work lay concealed here. Despite Shaw's statement to the contrary (and remembering how many great writers have been so often wrong when commenting on their own work), it seemed obvious that the cunning of the playwright's hand had defeated the intention of the writer's brain; the very quintessence of Shaw's dramatic genius was hidden in the book, and the Little Black Girl was merely waiting, like an African Sleeping Beauty, for a kiss of life . . . to emerge to a second, and a theatrical, life.

My own task, in arranging the work, has been very simple. I merely followed the story-line exactly, giving the narration to a pair of narrators . . . in the manner of the radio plays of the thirties . . . and assigning the various characters to a number of readers. The female narrator is to be taken by Dame Edith Evans, who once enchanted pre-war audiences with a superb Lilith in *Back to Methuselah*. The five readers are all taken by distinguished



actors who are skilled in varied characterisation. Each reader takes a wide range of parts, though there are certain basic characteristics appertaining to each particular reader. For example, reader Number Two assumes all the aspects of God, starting with the Roaring Horror of the Old Testament calling for blood sacrifices—which Shaw abominated—through Jesus Christ to a mad Irishman (a self-caricature of Shaw himself) in whom the Black Girl finally discovers God through marriage and motherhood. The presentation, though in the form of a dramatic reading, will have stylised costumes and music—provided by a genuine Nigerian drummer—and an exotic background which is based on a jungle picture of Douannier Rousseau.

The final result will not be a *play*—which would not please the spirit of Shaw or be a feasible artistic project—nor will it be a flat and spiritless reading which would betray the spirit of Shaw the instinctive dramatist. It will possibly be something that is unique in the theatre. Those who have seen it during rehearsal period have certainly remarked on its 'having the spirit of 1968'—for which the evergreen style of G B S can take all the credit! I certainly hope that it may provide both striking entertainment and much food for thought. The *Black Girl*'s unusual quest for God may provide a series of shocks, as well as a great deal of solace to a wide and varied public, who, provided that they are not like Shaw's friend Tolstoy—with whom he communicated regularly on religion in drama—do not find the mixture of religion and drama distasteful.

*The Adventures of a Black Girl in Search of God* is published by Penguin at 10s. 6d.

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Maria Casarès and Germaine Kerjean  
in Seneca's *Medea*

Photo: Pic

# PARIS

AUGY HAYTER REPORTS

**T**he two main tendencies in Paris theatre over the past year have been the continuing decentralisation of the theatre scene, with more and more municipally supported theatres springing to life in the Paris suburbs, and also the increasing number of young directors who have been coming to them.

Especially interesting were the series of plays given under the auspices of the Paris Biennale during the autumn; young directors were given a small subsidy to produce new plays of their choice at the Studio des Champs-Élysées or at the Musée d'Art Moderne. The conditions were, of course, far from ideal: the plays were given only two performances each and the actors were unpaid; yet in spite of this one sensed a great vitality and a desire to renew the more outworn aspect of contemporary theatre which out-balanced individual and technical shortcomings.

Jérôme Savory's *Oratorio Macabre du Radeau de la Méduse*, which he also decorated and directed, was a sort of controlled happening; the main theme being the survivors of a shipwreck on a raft degenerating joyfully into bestiality and cannibalism. The second act went on for what seemed like an eternity, with practically no action of any kind, punc-

tuated only by occasional rolls on a drum. Instead of organising this stillness, Savory let his actors do what they wanted, so that his play degenerated into complete inertia. But what was interesting was that after the first fury of being cheated had been spent, the audience settled down quite happily to watching nothing, and talked and joked among themselves as if sitting in a café watching the people go by.

*Saint Genevieve sur le Toboggan* by Graziela Martinez and Martine Barat was also a show in the happening bag; but it benefited enormously from some quite remarkable psychedelic back projections and the strong rhythm backing of the Soft Machine; the dances, choreographic gags and the strange and monstrous costumes contributed to make it one of the best shows of this type I have ever seen. It was obvious that Graziela Martinez's professionalism (she is a dancer and choreographer) gave the show a discipline which is generally lacking in most happenings. It is, after all, no accident that happenings were originated by painters and sculptors who were not entirely convinced by their own mediums of expression, and the fact that they were not men of theatre meant that a great many happenings degenerated into orgies of amateurish exhibitionism. But the fact remains that something important was started, and it is interesting that the qualities of the happening—ie, spontaneous improvisation—are percolating back into the over-rigid structures of the theatre. Peter Brook's work at the Aldwych and the Open Theatre's work in New York are examples of this, and it is heartening that it should be happening in Paris as well.

Képa Amouchastegui's *Un Jour le Cirque vint en Ville*, which he also directed, was a more conventional play about two children who perform ritual murders of their parents; although it leant rather too heavily on José Triana's *The Criminals* (seen at the Aldwych this autumn) it was an extremely promising first play, cleanly directed and quite remarkably performed by Robert Ohnigui and Michèle Oppenet as the two children.

*Le Drame des Constructeurs*, by the French poet Henri Michaux, was another interesting, though flawed, production. The director, Alain Halle Halle, placed the audience on each side of the playing area. Since the play was about the inmates of an asylum weaving ceaseless fantasies about building civilisations, the audience was made to feel that they too were patients. But here also the play slowed down to a snail's pace and went on far too long.

The Biennale also presented *Godot est Arrivé* by the Yugoslav novelist Milodrag Bulatovic, which was done by the Atelier de Genève and was directed very well by Jorge Lavelli. The play created a fair scandal in France, since it is a sequel to Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*. Bulatovic's solution to Beckett's enigma takes the form of Godot turning up as a baker carrying sacks of flour and ending up being rejected

by the four others; the point of it all eluded me when I saw it and hasn't become clearer since.

The other two plays I saw presented by the Biennale belong to the category which seems to be gaining momentum fast in avant-garde circles: that of orgasmic metaphysics. As with most intellectual discussions of sexual matters, both plays threaten to deliver the goods but never quite do. Guy Jacquet's production of Arrabal's *Le Grand Cérémonial* was rather inept although the introduction of a naked female corpse caused some craning of audience necks and much frustration since the corpse was on the ground and could only be seen with difficulty. The audience felt a bit cheated, justifiably so, I thought; after all, the avant-garde aficionado should have some recompense for his labours. The second play, *Les Immobiles* by Pierre Bourgeade, benefited from the immense talents of Rita Renoir, a striptease turned actress who gave convincing proof of her ability in both fields. Unfortunately, Pierre-Etienne Heymann's production made the wit of the play seem leaden and the rest of the cast seemed to be performing three or four different kinds of play.

Among the most interesting of the new directors to have appeared over the last few years is the Argentine-born Jorge Lavelli, whose production of Seneca's *Medea* can be seen at the Théâtre de France and whose production of Copi's *La Journée d'une Rêveuse* has just come on at the Théâtre de Lutèce. His staging of *Medea* is an exercise in controlled frenzy from start to finish built around the rock-like performance of Maria Casarès as Medea, who begins the play as if she were to die the next minute and, incredibly, increases the intensity right to the end when she screams triumphantly over the corpses of her two children she has murdered. The chorus' comments are spoken and chanted to a rhythm of handclaps over a very simple yet subtle music by Xenakis, which provides a rumbling ground-swell to Jean Vanthier's beautiful French text. Most plays achieve their maximum intensity somewhere toward the end of the second act; *Medea* is played at maximum emotional pitch throughout, and the effect is devastating.

*La Journée d'une Rêveuse* resembles *Medea* insofar as the action and characters of the play are seen through the eyes of one woman; but the atmosphere of Copi's play is completely different, being a world of innocence as opposed to a world of guilt. As the title implies, the play is a dream in which the heroine, Jeanne, played with infinite grace by Emmanuele Riva, dreams a day of her life which also becomes the entire course of her life. She starts the play as a child, falls in love, gives birth, her child grows up and leaves, her own love degenerates, and the play ends. This description is, of course, quite subjective and I could easily be wrong, because no rational means exist to communicate a dream. The characters in the



play are fully rounded, but only in the sense that a tree is fully rounded. They would have no existence outside of that which we are witnessing on stage, and yet they have a perfection we don't have. The man Jeanne falls in love with is a postman; it so happens that he is also a bird, and his other bird friends chirrup away in the trees above him in order to egg him on to seduce Jeanne. There is no logic to this work, only the progression of free-association images, and yet because of Lavelli's understanding and control, the play never falls into gratuitous gags or whimsy, but instead builds into a child-like image of what we are. Fantasy and escapism have now become two words which are generally the kiss of death in theatre, but Copi has escaped from the everyday reality of living into another reality which is the real sense of life.

# NEW YORK

ROBERT BRUSTEIN REPORTS

Joseph Papp is currently launching an anarchic assault on one of Shakespeare's best-loved plays, which, if ultimately disappointing as an event, nonetheless has sufficient originality as an experiment to compel attention. I found the whole undertaking to be pretty courageous, and while it has drawn a predictable response from those who prefer their Kulchur prepackaged, standardised, and wholly digestible like a TV dinner, I think it is bound to have an effect on the theatrical consciousness for some time to come. I should add that the evening is something of an ordeal—after its initial promise, this *Hamlet* gets rather boring—but one's quarrel is less with the intention of the enterprise than with its execution, less with the direction of the road than with the rocky nature of the terrain.

What Mr Papp has done, quite simply, is to annihilate the play as we have come to know it, substituting a corrupt hour-and-a-half cutting that arbitrarily transposes the order of the scenes, reassigns speeches from one character to another, reduces the *dramatis personae* drastically, and explodes the familiar pattern of action. His motive is clear: it is to rescue the play from the seminar room, to withdraw it from history, to obliterate the memory of all those beautifully spoken, handsomely costumed productions that now stand like

a wall between us and an immediate experience of the action. '*Hamlet* is like a sponge,' Jan Kott has written. 'Unless it is produced in a stylised and antiquarian fashion, it immediately absorbs all the problems of our time.' Mr Papp apparently believes that it is not simply stylisation or antiquarianism that has imprisoned the energies of this play. After all, we have already had our modern Hamlets, our Hamlets in rehearsal clothes, our Teddy boy Hamlets, our angry young man Hamlets—and in spite of everything, the great soliloquies still come wafting over the footlights for the audience to hum and mouth as they do arias in a Verdi opera.

It is for this reason, I suspect, that Mr Papp has refused to invest the play with any contemporary political or philosophical meaning, or to wring it dry of what Mr Kott calls 'the problems of our time'. What he has done instead is superimpose the modern experience forcibly on top of the play. The costuming tells us where we are (the guards wear GI uniforms, Claudius the beard, cigar, and dress of a South American dictator, Gertrude appears in negligees and Ophelia in miniskirts); the props are recognisably modern; and the incidental music ranges from torch songs to rhythm-and-blues (Ophelia sings her rock dirges into a mike, dressed like a Go-Go girl in a straw hat and tights). But despite an effective evocation of the brutal, menacing quality of the American military presence, Papp's *Hamlet* remains conscientiously against interpretation. It emerges as an Anti-*Hamlet*, antithetical to the very notion of a literary masterpiece; a Happening, where everything is designed for environmental effect rather than for meaning; a Dadaist nightmare, where language becomes an agency not of communication but rather of ironic contradiction and comic confusion, and where the spectator becomes one of the most important characters in the play.

The technique of this production is to force gratuitous vaudeville routines and bizarre bits of business into an uneasy contrapuntal relationship with the spoken word. Sometimes the stage business functions to literalise a metaphor—Hamlet's contention that 'Denmark's a prison' is illustrated by the manacles he wears throughout the opening scenes. More often, the visual effects are a distraction, designed to divert attention from the words—it is Horatio, not Hamlet, for example, who wears the striped garb of a convict. Hamlet is first seen emerging from a coffin which sits at the foot of the bed of Claudius and Gertrude, reading his 'Oh, that this too too sullied flesh' speech at breakneck speed, with no inflection whatever. The black rubber fingers of a candy store monster creep from beneath the bedclothes; they belong to the Ghost who appears here and throughout dressed in long droopy underwear (Hamlet wears boxer shorts). Hamlet plays his nunnery scene with Ophelia after having made love to her (Claudius also gets his whacks at

her inside the coffin), speaking the lines while standing in the audience and throwing peanuts at the stage. The play-within-the-play is a production number, sung and danced around a New Year's party table, complete with favours, paper hats, confetti, and balloons, all photographed by Horatio with an 8 mm movie camera.

Hamlet and the Ghost collaborate in two hilarious music-hall routines: the first when Hamlet sits in his father's lap like a ventriloquist's dummy and shares with him the lines of 'How all occasions do inform against me'; the second, during the Grave-digger's scene, where Hamlet plays a Puerto Rican janitor and the Ghost ('How came he *loco paisano*?') plays Hamlet. As for the duel scene, this becomes a game of Russian roulette played by the entire cast—including the audience, since Hamlet, alone among the piled bodies, must bring a spectator on stage to shoot him. 'The rest is silence,' he says, as an ear-crushing roar breaks over the loudspeakers and confetti falls from the ceiling.

The problem with all this is ultimate lack of coherence. The actors have been responsible for too much, the director for too little, with the result that the evening seems splintered into interesting but uncoordinated fragments. Mere irreverence is not enough to sustain a play even a third the length of Shakespeare's text, and even absurdity must be organised towards some definable point. Part of the trouble lies with the cast, which is not really capable of sustaining and executing the horseplay. Martin Sheen, playing a Hamlet high on Methadrine—hopped up, always on the move, continually laughing—effectively captures the manic, frenetic side of Shakespeare's hero, but for all his charm and energy, he is simply under-equipped technically for a role of this length and complexity. Fred Warriner as a vaudeville Ghost and Ralph Waite as a Castro-like Claudius are very amusing, but too many of the others looked puzzled and embarrassed at what they are required to do. What this production needs is a cast trained in comic improvisations—like the Open Theatre, the Second City, or the Beyond the Fringe troupes—lacking this, it could have used a little more time for its current members to develop the necessary techniques. I did admire David Mitchell's penitentiary setting, however, with its ominous grillwork and circular metal stairway, and the music of Galt MacDermot (who also wrote the score for *Hair*) proves the beneficial effect that one production can have on another in a permanent company's development.

By conventional standards, then, this *Hamlet* is a failure, but in failing it manages to be ten times more interesting than the slick, machine-honed successes of the other New York repertory companies. Mr Papp's group remains, to my mind, the most audacious permanent organisation in town, and the only one dedicated not simply to remounting familiar masterpieces but to trying to discover what theatre can mean to America in the sixties.



# GREEN ROOM

**T**wo cases in January of well-meaning theatrical projects which have been scalped in a jungle of red tape. One of them, Roy Dotrice's *Brief Lives*, died prematurely in New York and the other, Howard Sackler's scheduled production of *The Family Reunion* in Guildford, was still-born.

Dotrice was given a work permit in December by the Immigration Office in New York (with American Equity approval) for a limited run of Patrick Garland's adaptation of John Aubrey's diaries at the Golden Theater. After two weeks, excellent notices—including one which hinted that the show was 'too good' for Broadway—and a building box office, Jules Irving invited the production to the Forum Theater, a small arena in the basement of Lincoln Center's Vivian Beaumont Theater, which would otherwise have been dark until April, and which has the guaranteed security of a subscription audience.

Apart from Dotrice, an Englishman, this would have meant work for 16 American Equity members backstage who would otherwise, at least temporarily, have been resting. But Equity stuck rigidly to its 'no foreign actors at the Lincoln Center' ruling—a ruling raised and waived (with difficulty) over Anthony Quayle in *Galileo* and, recently, Geraldine Chaplin in *The Little Foxes*. As a result, the producer, David Susskind, says he has given up stage production for good and retreated to television. He appealed to Equity that he is a constant employer of American actors on TV and a previous buster of McCarthy's Black List—to no avail. He has joined the swelling ranks of those who believe that Broadway has become no more than several chunks of real estate, with the dice as loaded as in Las Vegas, and that American Equity, bound by old-fashioned codes, is doing nothing to stem a rapidly deteriorating situation.

Equity, on both sides of the Atlantic, of course, serves a necessary and useful function—that of defending the rights of its clients. In America the most militant, vociferous wing is the American Actors Corporation, the American-firsters, who are out to win the fight of American theatre—against the rest. AAC claims that the friction of free-trade for actors started in England (in the forties and early fifties with the importation wholesale of American musicals, including chorus and orchestra); and that whereas there is a quota for foreign actors in each Broadway production this is being abused, without reciprocation in London. Already the new *New York Times* critic, Clive Barnes, is under pressure, accused of praising only British plays and there was picketing on

the first nights of both *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* and *The Promise*. The present agreement runs out in March and it's fairly certain that after the new rulings the Broadway intake of British actors will fall sharply.

In England the system is marginally different: 'merit' they call it. A special Equity committee advises the Ministry of Labour as to whether or not an American actor shall be given a permit, and generally he won't be if a British actor or a 'resident North American alien' could play the role—not better, but at all. So it's easier for an entire company to be imported into London (La Mama, Open Theater, Paper Bag Players or a temporary group like the cast of *You're a Good Man Charlie Brown*) than for an English company—apart from those with international status like the National or the RSC—to travel en masse to Broadway. But, an Equity official admitted, it's harder for individual foreign actors here.

This applies to directors also. And such a one is Howard Sackler, whose application was turned down because he is American and the play is English (T S Eliot, so that point is debatable). This despite the fact that he was using English actors and had a letter from Mrs Eliot stating that her husband had particularly approved the idea of Sackler directing this play. And—more important—despite Sackler's consistent employment over the past few years, through Caedmon records, of literally hundreds of English Equity members. John Neville managed to lure Robert Ryan to Nottingham for *Othello* and *Long Day's Journey* and Jack Gelber is to direct an Arthur Kopit play at the Aldwych, so, obviously, much must depend on how the individual case is presented. The Sackler decision seems disturbingly mealy-mouthed.

The main stumbling block—at least on paper—to two-way goodwill would seem to be a complication in terminology. Whereas American Equity covers only stage actors, English Equity includes films and television actors. Statistically, therefore, English Equity feels hard done by: all those American actors in English movies, all those American movies taking up British television time. But a nagging suspicion remains that both AAC and the relevant committee here are losing the point. Perhaps an actor who is an avid committee man and spends most of his energy in labour and union wrangles shouldn't be in the theatre at all? Working, talented actors have little to fear from an open-house policy which, at root, can only encourage more work, wider horizons and a healthier theatre on both

sides of the Atlantic. All *they* have to fear is a closing down. Maybe before that crucial March meeting it would be wise for both sides to get together.

## Four-lettered Words

**P**eter Hall's absence from the directors' roll at Stratford this season is explained by the artistic reshuffle that leaves Trevor Nunn in charge in the newly created role of artistic director and of course by his film work—the editing of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and the shooting of *Macbeth*. His first essay into the cinema, *Work Is a Four-lettered Word*, will probably be released in May. Meanwhile work is hung up over another kind of four-letter word; the one which is reportedly giving the Lord Chamberlain a few final spasms in Harold Pinter's one-act *Landscape*, which Hall was supposed to direct at the Aldwych in the autumn. Pinter, rightly, refuses to stoop to squalid negotiations, presumably in the hope that by the end of the year the Lord C will have been rendered impotent (while Avril Fox's Cosmo action group is attempting to rally opinion on Pinter's behalf) and is at work on another short piece—the fated play's companion. The Lord Chamberlain could fill in his time watching some television to discover just how outmoded his own verbal prurience has become and to ponder on the wisdom of interfering with Pinter who, with the success of *The Homecoming* and *The Birthday Party* in New York, is worth his weight in dollars.

## Provincial Fall-Out

**N**ew Year's Day augured ill for the provincial theatre. Up in Bradford, at a Students' Drama Festival, John Neville was again making life easy for the headline writers, by branding himself as a member of the Sacked Provincial Directors' Club. In Leicester, John Hales received a letter from the Board of the Phoenix Theatre Trust dismissing him.

He had been there a year (without a contract) presenting a diet of revivals and new English drama, all of which were submitted to his board and received their approval. Hales says that he was aware of disapproval on two occasions—from a group of what he suspects were non-theatregoers over *Entertaining Mr Sloane* and in the local press for importing obscenity and vice with *Live Like Pigs*. Hales is thirty, a young man, and what shattered him most was that as far as he knew the board were busy drafting his long-term contract rather than a letter firing him.



This is unquestionably deeply regrettable; and it is a black mark against the members of the Leicester board that they could not deal more tactfully with another human being. But perhaps the board were unhappy about the *standard* of his work and—although this is a small comfort which doesn't salve bitterness—that happens every day in all sorts of jobs all over the country. Any employer has the right to dismiss an employee and this particular board, with Mr Kelly the boot and shoe manufacturer at its head, engaged Mr Hales and were within their rights in dismissing him. Just as Hales would have been within *his* right in dismissing an actor if he wasn't satisfied. And justly annoyed he would be if that actor kicked up a campaign against him.

Equally valid: if John Hales had wanted to move on to another job in another theatre he would have considered himself perfectly free to do so. Ian Mullins in Cheltenham had been applying for other jobs before he got his notice three months ago. Neville's case is different and more complex (although by now the issues have become muddled over with attacks and counter-attacks) but even he—it is possible—might, one day, have wished to leave Nottingham. He could have done so. Why then is a board not free to dismiss its chosen artistic director?

Neville has accused the Arts Council of an ambivalent attitude towards its professed neutrality and of therefore making the provincial director's job impossible. But could he and other repertory theatre directors cope with State Oligarchy? The rules would then, of necessity, become rigid and a good deal more limiting than the relative freedom of the present system.

Which is not to say that the present system does not need to be amended. And, of course, the Arts Council, the accessible butt-end for blame, is not perfect (its own special committee of enquiry is at present looking into just this sort of problem). And probably most of the members of local boards have been sitting on them too long and haven't adjusted to the changing mood of the theatre; a limited term of office and the inclusion of some active members from the playgoers' clubs could only help.

It's right, too, that the discussion should be public and publicised. But before we're all consumed in a fizz of angry fire it would be well to remember that over forty non-commercial theatres up and down the country are running comparatively smoothly, built up and maintained by boards working in harmony with their chosen directors. Anarchy is catching, the St Sebastian image a romantic one, but it would be a pity if the arrows start an epidemic.

## National's New Image

**R**ecent events point a few clues to the way things might develop on the South Bank. The National, with childhood behind it, is entering its adolescence with

a more conscious attempt to include and inform the public of its doings. Olivier, on his trip to Expo, appointed as public relations officer a Canadian, who'll have a press officer to back him up with day-to-day information.

Then there's the appointment of Frank Dunlop as administrative director. His job will involve a lot of paper work (probably only one production a year, kicking off with Brecht's *Edward II* at the end of April). But it's something he enjoyed when he was running Pop Theatre and he derives a somewhat kinky pleasure out of what he calls 'adjusting the machinery to get more done without spending extra money'.

So far his plans are only theories, not even at the drawing-board stage, but the one he's keenest to get off the ground is provision for a young audience (both he and Joan Plowright are on the Arts Council's Youth Theatre panel). Already the National runs a fortnightly 'New Audience' session, with reduced seat prices and a concluding back-and-forth discussion between audience and cast. But, as Dunlop points out, 'Why should an eleven-year-old want to see *King Lear*? Over a quarter of the population are aged between five and twenty, yet what percentage of subsidised theatre is aimed at them?'

After a visit to *The Paper Bag Players* Dunlop has become convinced that any youth wing should be linked with an

experimental group. 'You can be more avant-garde with children—they don't need rules and conventions to keep them happy. In fact, they respond more without them.' Whilst it would be disastrous if this end of the company's work—if it's possible to get it going—had any 'reject' connotations, it could provide what is at present lacking, a quarter where new writers could be given a chance without too much at stake.

## Doctors in the House

**B**eware St John Ambulance. Dr Benjamin Gilbert has cornered the medical market of all Broadway's thirty-four theatres, plus several cinemas, the Metropolitan Opera, Carnegie Hall, New York City Center and, what *Variety* calls, 'niteries'. He was introduced to show-biz when, as a student, he played the trumpet with the Clayton, Jackson and (Jimmy) Durante group. Now he has a staff of twelve who work around the clock giving flu shots, dealing with sprains and breaks (prolific in musicals), pre-curtain alcoholism and six deaths in the stalls a year. Here there is no such monopoly; the West End is served by three or four doctors. And they don't just do it for money: Peter Saunders recalls one who loved the theatre too, so much that he would sit devotedly through the whole performance if A E Matthews was feeling groggy.

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Tuesday 5th MARCH for one week	Oxford Playhouse Company BERTHOLT BRECHT'S <b>'THE GOOD WOMAN OF SETZUAN'</b> starring SHEILA HANCOCK	
Monday 11th MARCH for one week	The ROYAL BALLET presents <b>'BALLET FOR ALL'</b> Mon: The Dancer and the Dance Tues: Two Coppelias Weds: The World of Giselle Thurs: The Dancer and the Dance Fri: The World of Giselle Sat. Mat: The Dancer and the Dance Sat. Eve: Two Coppelias	
Monday 18th MARCH for one week	Worthing Connaught Theatre Trust presents <b>'THE GLASS MENAGERIE'</b> The Famous Play by TENNESSEE WILLIAMS starring BESSIE LOVE, FRANCESCA ANNIS, GILBERT WYNNE	
Monday 25th MARCH for one week	Bloomsbury Plays Ltd. <b>'EMMA'</b> by JANE AUSTEN newly adapted for the stage by ROBERT OWEN starring DIANA LAMBERT, TERENCE DUFF, JOHN MARTIN	



# NEW BOOKS

TYNAN RIGHT AND LEFT. By Kenneth Tynan. Longmans, 50s

Useless to pretend to any detachment towards this author. I have been haunted by Tynan from the first time I saw that hatchet face looming out of the Oxford fog almost 20 years ago. There is nothing unique about that. I can think of other underlings in postwar Oxford (the most cold-bloodedly competitive society I've ever experienced) who have spent their subsequent careers trying to catch up with him; but I wonder if anyone was quite as badly bitten as I was with the Tynan bug—a curious disease; a mixture of envy, fascination, and fear characterised by fantasies of his glamorously satanic private life and nightmares in which I was turned to stone by looking at his head crawling with snakes.

When I went to work on *The Observer* the distance infinitesimally lessened; and to my surprise he was exceedingly polite. But he still affected me like the Gorgon's head. He had only to walk into a room for me to turn into a tongue-tied idiot. He would show up sometimes on Saturday morning to cut his copy. He wasn't the composers' favourite contributor. ('The best theatre critic we ever had,' Mr Lucas once told me firmly, 'was St John Ervine: what clean copy that man had!') But he always cut exactly to length, chain-smoking in a grimy little backroom, and covering a page-proof with variant phrasings with his hands splayed out over the desk like stick insects. The nervous tension was terrific. And then he was off; a skeletal figure in a star's overcoat—what a subject for a Beerbohm cartoon!

Much of the theatrical material in *Tynan Right and Left* passed through my hands as a sub-editor. Not that there was much scope for subbing, as he left no margins and had to be consulted on all queries. This could not be done until midday when he was aroused with mulligatawny soup after working on his piece for most of the night. As his deputy, eagerly swabbing up any stray openings at the Pembroke, Croydon, or plays he had panned in New York, I had another interest in his weekly articles. The more space he took, the less there was for me. But no matter how miserable the fragment I finished up with, I never wished he had written shorter.

Second-strings, of course, are always

prone to get a crush on number one critics (Trewin on Ivor Brown; Alan Dent on Agate). No doubt I'm a victim of the same process. But I can think of a good many reasons for claiming that he sets the standard; and that since he retired from the game nobody has come within miles of reaching it. Starting from the basic equipment, there is his unrivalled ability to fuse plot synopsis with comment—'Its setting is Mont St Michel, that rainily picturesque island that dangles like a pendant from the coast of Normandy: more wet sand and solitude you couldn't wish for. Here in the 1880s live a cold-hearted hosier . . .'

That comes from a film review, and films are not his best subject (he is happiest with the living, breathing subjects that can be changed by what is said about them); but note how much is packed into it. Accurate reportage of the location; implied comment on the reason why it was chosen, and criticism of the choice as an example of the camera's power to transmit atmosphere that hasn't been creatively earned; the expression of these two points by balanced antithesis—fancy, travel-brochure prose changing at half time to a slap in the chops. Then that word 'hosier'—in itself quite neutral, but in that position an absolute sledge-hammer. This is characteristic: a perfect word, locked in the right position into an elegant pattern. Look at any page, and you find a network of internal alliteration, and slightly surprising words that exactly fit the thought. The sound that reverberates through his writing is that of nails being hit square on the head.

Beneath the style, and shaping it, is absolute honesty of response. If he still hasn't fully sorted out his impressions of a production he makes no attempt to short-circuit the process but presents a set of interim notes—like his first notice of the Brook-Scofield *Lear*. Coming from anybody else, a set of programme jottings would be unreadable; but Tynan uses this handicap to find another way of writing a well-formed article. He never relaxes; he never takes the easy way out. In his early days this sometimes looked like narcissism, but now it is simply the instinct of a great performer: above all in his parodies, like the reply to Coward, and the translation of

a Dick Lester film into typographical terms ('THIS this THIS this THIS is the kind of THING (from outer SPACE?) you can expect from *Help!*, the new (and BAM!! it's new or never) film directed by focus-pulling, prize-winning, gag-spawning, zoom-loving Richard ('The KNACK') Lester, shot (POWWW!) in Eastman-colour . . .').

I can see the objections to Tynan. His hero-worship and his regular change of gurus (Alan Watts and Zen in America; Christopher Caudwell and John Berger when he is writing as a would-be Isaac Deutscher; and now Konrad Lorenz and the territorial imperative). I agree that he hasn't been the most infallible tipster on new writers; and sometimes he has walked into carefully laid traps—as he did by tagging the amorous siblings in *Under Plain Cover* with *le vice anglais* when Osborne had left their pleasures craftily unspecified. And personally I can do without Tynan the gastronomic tourist; once launched into a 'rich *saucisson chaud*, followed unwisely by too much *volaille à la broche* he gets altogether too much on the Right for my taste. But, of course, it is the continued presence of the malicious, sceptical, basilisk-eyed Oxford dandy inside the honest radical that keeps him sharp.

*Tynan Right and Left* is a more varied book than *Curtains*. Besides the formal reviews, it contains extended pieces chronicling such events as the *Lady Chatterley* trial, his experience subpoenaed by the (now battle-scarred) Senator Dodd, and his reflections on the human bottom. There is no barrel-scraping. But if one thing stands out it is his capacity—like another great columnist Walter Lipmann—to retain his convictions while continually changing his position. No critic ever had a more polemical point of view; and no critic was ever a more accurate reporter. And out of the dialectic of what is and what ought to be, there crystallise those recurring formulations which stick longest in the memory, and do most to influence how we think and write. This is well known, but it is one of the best:

The people who exalt abstractions, concepts, dogmas, ideals and ideologies above the five great human imperatives of birth, food, shelter, love-making and death—these are and have always been, the satirist's *raison d'être* and his perpetual target.

IRVING WARDLE

THE MAKING OF THE AMERICAN THEATRE. Howard Taubman. Longmans, 65s

Howard Taubman who, for several years, was drama critic for the *New York Times* (ie God) is a mellow, nostalgic writer who obviously loves the theatre and, incredibly, has retained that love,

despite protracted exposure to New York's worst specimens. His panorama of the American theatre, from the dicey old days of Royall Tyler's *The Contrast* (the first native American play) to the present,

is thorough, comprehensive, accurate, balanced, never coddling, always critical, wholly readable, but disconcertingly topographical.

He is very good at the 17th and 18th century origins, particularly at describing the transition from a British-dominated stage to the beginnings of an American tradition. As he charts the course of the



'new' theatre, he is fair to everyone and states his prejudices without apology or cuteness. He doesn't disguise his antipathy for Beckett nor his nostalgia for the good old days of ribald comics and machine-made song-and-dance shows. It is a fear-less frankness which almost disarms criticism. What can one say to a man who, at the height of Brechtomania, declares: 'Arturo Ui is one of Brecht's weakest, most obvious pieces,' or who sees off-Broadway mainly as a court of appeals where neglected uptown failures can be given a second hearing. It is Taubman's tacit assumption that Broadway is the American theatre, and anything that happens off-Broadway (be it in Shaftesbury Avenue or Sheridan Square) has relevance only to the degree that it affects Broadway procedure or produce. It is this attitude which makes the book almost Runyon-esque in its allegiance to the Broadway mystique.

Taubman industriously lists the plays, the players, the vicissitudes of the seasons, the changing trends, the highs, the lows, the constancies, and manages to suggest that statistics are somehow the whole story. When approaching an important event, be it the formation of the Group Theatre, the emergence of the Living Theatre, or the arrival of Albee after a dearth of American playwriting, he never quite musters a sense of dramatic moment. Too frequently, he relies on a fanfare of superlatives when only dramatic climax, carefully prepared, can do the trick. There is an assumption in the book that history is a continuum of events, a passing from season to season, rather than a series of unpredictable breakthroughs and reversals.

A potted history of the American theatre could read as follows:

It started as a reverberation of the English stage, took to the road and became a showcase for star-performers, began to take itself seriously at the beginning of this century, paid for ignoring the aesthetic advances of Europe by subsequently vulgarizing social-realism in the 30's and psychological-realism in the 40's, was taken prisoner by the unions and booking-agents in the 50's, and now depends largely on transfusions from abroad, mainly England, as the spunkiest of its native groups have gone abroad because of the stultifying cultural and political atmosphere propagated by three hundred years of philistinism and materialism.

One gleans all of this from Taubman's book but craves more insights into the whys and wherefores. How, for instance, organised labour came to tyrannise Broadway production. How the actor-dominated theatre of the early 1900's gradually gave way to a writer's theatre and, ultimately, the director's theatre which now reigns. Where, in all of these permutations, Off-off-Broadway comes in; how, and to what degree the contemporary American theatre is shifting away from thirties-orientated realism into areas dominated by Beckett,

Genet and Antonin Artaud.

Maybe this is an irrelevant complaint, and that is not the book Taubman intended to write. What he has written is a

sound, useful and necessary text on the American Theatre. I would now urge him to sit down and write as thorough a sub-text.

CHARLES MAROWITZ

THE STAGE YEAR BOOK 1967. Edited by Anthony Merryn, Carson and Comerford, 31s 6d

**A**part from drawing attention to its already evident usefulness, how do you review a reference book like *The Stage Year Book*? There are, it is true, some introductory articles reviewing the year by the staff of *The Stage* which might be taken up as talking points. But it is not so much for these as the subsequent 400 pages of reference material that most of us will be forking out our 31s 6d this year. There is also, it is true, an opening section of pictures—but once again these are dwarfed by the following tightly packed pages of lists of playbills, agents, managements, theatres, theatrical suppliers and theatre directories which is what really guarantees the book a place on theatrical bookshelves.

The format throughout is admirably clear and concise, even if some sections are a little overshadowed in their presentation by the publisher's dream and the layout man's nightmare—an abundance of advertising. But apart from commenting on their overall appearance, the reviewer can only deal with lists on this scale by sampling one or two with which he is familiar. So here goes.

In a sphere as fluid as the theatre one of the hazards of a book of this kind is that it will be overtaken by events. Thus, in the Theatre Directory section, Peter Cheeseman's name has been removed from the Victoria Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, although since the book went to press Mr Cheeseman is back. It is the sort of thing that is duplicated on many pages and I don't see how it could have been avoided without recourse to a crystal ball.

I was interested to learn from the Publications Section that there is a weekly publication *Abracadabra*, edited by Goodliffe the Magician, who presumably has his own special methods for dealing with recalcitrant contributors and slow-moving printers. Though it is heretical to say so in this context, I cannot, however, understand why this section lists *Films and Filming* but omits *Sight and Sound*.

I expect it is a question of trying to find a representative selection. And if this sort of problem editor Anthony Merryn has had to resolve in the many hundreds of other lists, few will envy him his task.

Anyway, I find his book indispensable.

PETER ROBERTS

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This series, by an author unknown to this reviewer at least, has a great deal to recommend it, both to the general reader and to the specialist who would value an up-to-date and thoroughly workman-like assessment of our four most significant playwrights. They are in a nicely produced, well illustrated paperback edition, and so modestly priced, but don't let the heading 'educational' fool you—Mr Hayman knows his subject too well to write down to the reader, and he's obviously done a lot of homework. There's a comprehensive list of all the texts discussed, with publishers too, and a handy breakdown of the key performances of each play, with notes of the director and leading performers in each case. And he examines the plays with easy and frequent reference to those performances; speaking of the recent revival of *Serjeant Musgrave's Dance*: 'As Musgrave, Iain Cuthbertson lacked Ian Bannen's taut, tortured compulsiveness' and of *A Patriot For Me*: 'Yet for all Redl's weaknesses, Osborne makes him very likeable in the script—much more likeable than Maximilian Schell made him in his stiff performance at the Royal Court.'

But for all the chattiness of the style, these are scholarly studies which combine a thorough summary of the plays concerned with a lively critical commentary. Their thoroughness can be judged from the Beckett study which, apart from discussing all his plays, including those written for television and for radio, also includes for good measure a pretty comprehensive examination of the novels and critical works as well. He quotes at length from *Malone Dies* and even gives us a paragraph on the Buster Keaton-Beckett *Film*. There are plenty of references to the famous productions, all used to make specific points in his argument, which in

this case seeks to analyse the reasons why Beckett has been so overpraised, and while Hayman extracts every ounce of importance from the works, acknowledging Beckett's purity of style and his innovative influence on the whole of Martin Esslin's *Theatre of the Absurd*, nonetheless he comes out strongly against what he terms the theatrically self-destructive course which Beckett has taken since *Krapp's Last Tape*. He knocks him pretty hard, in fact, and his arguments, though necessarily concise, carry sufficient weight because we are always aware that the writer speaks from an informed and so well-reasoned standpoint.

On John Osborne, Hayman is equally as good at standing back from his subject and putting a critical perspective on works which he feels may have escaped considered attention at the time of their initial performance. He sees in *The Entertainer* a play which is better constructed and much less conventional than *Look Back In Anger*, and which at the same time is far more happily Brechtian than *Luther*. The latter he cuts down to size with some glee; Osborne appears to have culled practically all of the historical and psychological information on Luther from a psycho-analytical interpretation, *Young Man Luther*, by Erik H Erikson, and Hayman directs us to the appropriate article by Gordon Rupp in the *Cambridge Quarterly*, going on to show through the fragmentary quality of the narrative and the superficiality of the borrowed Brechtian tricks that the play is another of Osborne's one-man shows, in which his interest in the central figure obscures practically every other element in the work. 'The play was treated with enormous respect by most of the critics,' he ends, rather wickedly.

The Pinter study is the most tentative of

the four. Hayman shows a fair appreciation of Pinter's effectiveness, of his theatricality, of the way in which his speech patterns have developed and he sees a general obsession with what he calls 'the motif of hunting' and the animal behaviour of the characters, but while he is lavish in his praise of these qualities he falls back more frequently on a simple summary of the plots than in the other studies. His summaries are never less than interpretative, but there is a feeling here that the mysterious 'Pinteresque' flavour is for him still pretty indefinable.

Whereas with John Arden he is right back on form. Everyone who writes on such a subject as the contemporary theatre is entitled to his own particular enthusiasms, and Hayman shows considerable understanding of this playwright. Always aware of Arden's shortcomings, his stylistic inconsistencies, his tendency to over-simplify attitudes and personalities, still he senses the extraordinary potential of great stretches of the writing. To start comparing Arden with Shakespeare sounds unlikely and embarrassing, but he substantiates the description 'Shakespearean' in his examination of *Ironhand* and particularly of *Armstrong's Last Goodnight*: 'No playwright since Shakespeare can have exploited a forest setting so fully, with only the density of Arden's compromise recreation of sixteenth-century Scots to assist the illusion.' He rates *Serjeant Musgrave's Dance* 'one of the best dozen plays to be written in England since the war' and quite correctly elevates *Live Like Pigs* as the most balanced and totally successful of the plays, concluding that of all the writers in the series, Arden is the most likely to produce eventually a work of greatness. Here, admittedly, Hayman seems to be on his strongest ground, but throughout these four very different studies he never fails to illuminate the authors in question and, most important, to encourage fresh thought.

FRANK COX

THE WORLD OF MELODRAMA. By Frank Rahill. American University Publishers Group Ltd., 56s

Unnumerable drama laboratories and research institutes in drama exist in the United States. They have vast wealth in research material and scholarship is greatly indebted to the Library of Congress which, as the principal repository, contains 400,000 pieces of drama in its book collection and 210,000 unpublished plays in manuscript and typescript, exclusive of 200,000 opera and operetta libretti. The University of Chicago Library houses the unique William Harlowe Briggs Collection of 14,000 theatrical reviews in the late 19th and early 20th century. Of all these sources Mr Rahill has made extensive use. The scholarly value of his book is further enhanced by the inclusion of a thorough bibliography.

He has burrowed in the field of virtually unknown English, French and American plays of the 19th century. He shows how the opening up of the West, the exploitation of the worker by the more ruthless type of employer and the maltreatment of the Negro supplied material for tub-thumping dramas and tear-jerkers. He also unearths the work of the prolific Guilbert de Pixerecourt who wrote more than fifty plays, using every device for provoking terror and arousing suspense with spectacular stage-effects and a predilection for violence.

He has considerable information of interest on the flashy figure of Dionysus Lardner Boucicault who popularised the figure of the 'Stage Irishman' and whose

melodrama *The Shaugraun* on rack-renting landlords was recently revived by the Abbey Theatre.

He is informative on such topics as the building of 19th century theatres, the way in which the pirating of plays was suppressed and more severe copyright laws gave the dramatist a new status. He traces the influence of powerful actor-managers and shows how dramatists at the end of the century were able to draw huge royalties so that Arthur Wing Pinero made the sum of £18,000 and Sardou was paid \$9,000 for the American rights of his play *Odette*.

He suggests that, in the course of the 19th century, with the theatre's growing reputation and respectability, such writers as Bulwer Lytton, Charles Dickens, Charles Reade and Wilkie Collins found an audience for their work in the theatre

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## THE ITALIAN GIRL—*from page 42*

FLORA: Bravo! Well done, Uncle Edmund.

EDMUND: It's not possible—

FLORA: Oh, isn't it? There's nothing wrong with *him*, I can tell you.

EDMUND (*slowly*): Do you know what kind of man this is?

FLORA: Oh, very well. . . .

EDMUND: How could you even speak to a creature like that?

FLORA: We didn't speak much—

EDMUND (*bursting out*): How could you let him *touch* you!

FLORA (*blazing back*): I liked him touching me!

(*Pause.*)

Let me know if you're going to faint.

(*They face each other. EDMUND pale and shocked, FLORA flushed and defiant, near to hysteria.*)

EDMUND (*turning away*): If Otto finds out I don't know what he'll do. . . .

FLORA: I do. But that's not your problem, is it, unless you feel it's your *duty* to tell him. You can if you like, it doesn't matter. I'm all right now.

(*She looks down at the ground, and rubs something out with the toe of her shoe.*)

EDMUND (*turning back to her*): Flora, listen to me. You and I are going to the house now, we're going to see your mother and show her precisely—

FLORA: My mother! Oh, you bloody idiot. . . . You don't know how funny that is—

EDMUND: If you mean this—infatuation she thinks she has, I know all about it—

FLORA: Infatuation! Oh, why are men so stupid! You're all as bad as my father—like a lot of great rhinos, brutal and beastly, and all you can do is trample, trample, trample. . . .

EDMUND: Flora, pull yourself together!

(*He shakes her.*)

FLORA: Don't touch me! You know, I actually think you're enjoying this! Watching us all do what you haven't the guts to do yourself.

EDMUND: Flora, Isabel *must* know the whole story—

FLORA: She *knows* the whole story. How do you think it all started? Don't you understand, that bitch had him first!

EDMUND: What?

FLORA: He only took up with me to spite her, because they quarrelled. He got me pregnant then he went back and told her. They discussed what I'm like in bed. They'd been sleeping together for months! Now do you see!

(*She puts her hands to her face, one covering her mouth, the other with fingers spread on her brow as if to stop her head from bursting open. She sits on the tomb and cries quietly. There is a pause, while EDMUND collects himself.*)

EDMUND: Flora, I'm sorry. I didn't mean to—lecture you or—interfere. I just want to help you, that's all. Won't you let me?

(*No reply. He sits beside her.*)

I'd like to take you to London with me, away from all this—Maggie and I have talked it over and we think it would be the best thing for you.

(*She looks at him, but says nothing.*)

I have a spare room, I think you'll find it reasonably comfortable. It's very quiet there, very peaceful. I have a fair

number of books, and a wireless set. I work in my room, so if you want to be by yourself I shall keep out of the way; but if at any time you want to talk, I shall be there. And I promise I shan't moralise. You've been through a difficult time, but it's over now, thank God. What you need now is a period of calm, a retreat, and a chance to make some kind of personal revaluation—to start a new life. . . . Well, what do you say. . . ? Flora?

FLORA: Uncle Edmund, I think you're pathetic.

(*She gets up and turns on him.*)

Can't you get it into your head that you're of no interest to me? I don't want to be a nun! You bore me. I know what I want. Leave me alone.

(*She picks up her suitcase and puts it on the bed.*)

EDMUND: Flora, you must get away from here—

FLORA: So that Mummy can have a clear run with darling David? You're joking.

(*She opens the suitcase and takes out a powder compact.*)

EDMUND: Flora, listen to me, please—

FLORA: Go away. The show's over, you've had your thrills, there's nothing more to stay for. Go back to your monastery where you belong.

(*She begins to powder her face, leaning over the bed a little. Her skirt swings up.*)

EDMUND: Flora, I quite realise—

FLORA: We don't want you here. Go home and play with your little bits of wood.

EDMUND: Flora—

(*He takes hold of her arm. She gives a cry, and turns, trying to wrench her arm away.*)

FLORA: Don't touch me, you—cripple!

EDMUND: Flora, please. . . .

(*She raises her other hand to strike him. He catches her by the wrist.*)

FLORA: Let go of me!

(*She bares her teeth and kicks him. They struggle. Then, in the confusion, he has his arm tightly round her waist and is pressing her close to him.*)

EDMUND: Flora, please. . . .

(*She grows still. With a moan he sinks his face into her hair.*)

DAVID enters. EDMUND lets FLORA go.)

DAVID: Well, Uncle, how is it with you?

(*Like an escaping animal, FLORA rushes out. EDMUND, breathing hard, rubs his hands over his face. DAVID comes nearer, carefully keeping the tomb between him and EDMUND.*)

What price Sir Galahad now? What price Saint Edmund the Confessor? Eh, Uncle?

EDMUND: So it was you. All you.

DAVID: It was me. Lucky, lucky me.

EDMUND: Otto trusted you.

DAVID: My Lord Otto is deaf and blind. He has other fish to fry, as you well know—Inspector. . . . And now, shall I draw your blood a little, why not? You were so beautifully caught. . . . But no, I shall do the Christian thing; you shall admonish me. Thunder away, great uncle. I deserve it all. Speak to me daggers, whip me with scorpions. Come, I will submit, I bare my bosom to take the stroke.

(*He throws open his shirt.*)

EDMUND: Do you know what you've done—?

DAVID: Oh, I do, I do! What does it say in the gospels?

(*He gabbles the text delightedly.*) 'Whoso shall offend one of these little ones it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck. . . . I am that man, I made the innocent to stumble.



(*He kisses his fingertips. EDMUND moves threateningly.*)  
But wait, what else does it say in the gospels? 'Let him who is without sin among you cast the first stone.'

EDMUND: Get out, damn you! Get out of this house!

DAVID (*chuckling*): I'll go when I'm ready. . . .

(*DAVID skips to the bed, and pulls out the top article from Flora's suitcase—a nightdress. He flourishes it at EDMUND, then half-buries his face in it, peering at EDMUND over the top.*)

Fair flowers and ripe berries, we like them both, don't we? And when we fall we know where we like to fall. Or do I wrong you, uncle dear? Perhaps you don't really like girls? Perhaps you prefer boys, delicious milk-white boys as beautiful as angels? But no—you don't really like anything at all. You are one of those ones. And that's why you hate us, you hate to see us at it.

EDMUND: Go away, Levkin, or I shall probably hit you.

DAVID: Hit me then, beat me! If a man strike you on the cheek, offer him the other. I offer you both cheeks, Uncle, I offer you—

(*He puts his arms round EDMUND, who flings him off violently.*)

Ah! Old rhino, old rhino! Yes, I saw it all—and you were worth seeing, Uncle, you were!

(*He dodges away again.*)

EDMUND (*picking up a chisel*): Get out, or I'll kill you—

DAVID: No, no—it is Lord Otto who will kill me, and when that moment comes I will not resist. He too, is an animal and a buffoon like you, but at least he knows it! Rhino, rhino! Here, take this!

(*He throws the nightdress over EDMUND'S head and holds it there.*)

Take it home and paw it over in your lonely stable.

(*EDMUND, paralysed, drops the chisel to the ground.*)

EDMUND: I'll tell—I'll tell—!

DAVID: There is no one to tell, you see. Poor Uncle Edmund—the world is full of evil, and there is no one to tell. (*He skips out, chuckling with glee. EDMUND slowly sinks down on to the tomb and cries, holding the nightgown to his face.*)

*The lights fade.*)

## ACT TWO Scene Twelve

*Isabel's room. The fire is blazing.*

(*ISABEL is sitting listening to Wagner on the gramophone. She is in a shabby blue dressing gown with the sleeves rolled up. She looks dishevelled, crumpled, sleepy and vague. There is a knock on the door.*)

ISABEL: Come in.

(*Enter MAGGIE with a tea tray.*)

Oh it's you.

MAGGIE: (*with a faint smile*) Why not?

ISABEL: I can't think. I suppose I keep hoping that somebody quite new will come through that door. Well, we've had Edmund, haven't we? We've had Edmund. . . .

(*A pause as MAGGIE goes about quietly laying the tea. ISABEL gazes at her.*)

Discreet as usual. The perfect family servant. No comments. No opinions. You've brought tea, biscuits. I suppose it's natural to you to feed us—you just go on and on doing it—automatically.

(*Pause.*)

Well, tell me something, Maggie. Startle me.

MAGGIE: Flora's back.

ISABEL: Oh. Is she all right?

MAGGIE: Yes.

ISABEL: Well, I suppose we know what that means. . . . (*she shivers and pulls the dressing gown round her throat*) It's cold. Put another log on the fire, would you. . . .

(*MAGGIE does so.*)

ISABEL: Where is the pretty little creature at the moment?

MAGGIE: She went to the workshop.

ISABEL: I see. . . . And Otto's still at the quarry?

MAGGIE: Yes.

ISABEL: I suppose youth does make them—resilient. . . . (*She gets up and paces the room.*)

I just wish she'd find somewhere else to put herself just at present. Am I being unnatural? Do you think I'm unnatural, Maggie?

MAGGIE: Edmund wants to take her to London.

ISABEL: Oh, he does, does he? You know, I think poor Uncle rather fancies her, don't you?

(*Pause.*)

Well, I can't expect you to comment on that.

MAGGIE: He seems to like her company. . . .

ISABEL: Well done, Maggie. I wonder if you and I could begin to communicate with each other after all? Perhaps we will, as the years roll on? I might even become a second Lydia to you. . . . All right, I've hurt you again. I can't think how you've managed to remain such a sensitive plant after all the wincing you must have had to do in this place. All right, you can go—

MAGGIE: Thank you.

(*She moves to the door.*)

Oh, by the way, I've found this—

(*She takes a large envelope from her apron pocket.*)

ISABEL: What is it?

MAGGIE: Lydia's will.

ISABEL: Lydia's will!

(*She snatches it and begins to tear it open as MAGGIE exits and the lights fade.*)

## ACT TWO Scene Thirteen

*The kitchen. Immediately afterwards.*

(*EDMUND is pacing the room nervously. MAGGIE enters with a tray, returning from Isabel's room. As soon as she comes in EDMUND goes quickly to her. He is extremely anxious and upset, and because of this he takes it out on MAGGIE, behaving like a spoilt child.*)

EDMUND: Maggie! Where on earth have you been?

MAGGIE: (*calmly*) Serving tea.

EDMUND: (*petulantly*) I've been waiting for you for ages!

I wanted to talk to you—

MAGGIE: (*putting down the tray*) I have to do my work.

EDMUND: But you're *always* here when one wants you! You practically live in this kitchen. I hope you're not going to start disappearing all over the place so that we can't rely on you?

MAGGIE: (*drily*) No, I shall continue to be—reliable. What can I do for you?

(*She looks at him. He avoids her eyes like a naughty schoolboy.*)

EDMUND: Maggie, I—I've just made the most awful fool of myself.

MAGGIE: Oh?

EDMUND: With Flora. When she got back—I—I don't know how it happened, but I'm afraid I frightened her.

MAGGIE: Dear me. What did you do?

EDMUND: I sort of—jumped on her. I mean I—got hold of her—

MAGGIE: Che peccato. Do you often jump on young girls?

EDMUND: I haven't touched a woman in years!



(*He turns away in anger and confusion.*)

MAGGIE: No girls? And no boys either?

EDMUND: No! . . . Certainly not.

(*He turns to glare at her, then picks up his wood blocks.*

MAGGIE gives a little smile and picks up her sewing.)

MAGGIE: So what is it you want? Sympathy or advice?

(EDMUND throws down the blocks.)

EDMUND: (*suddenly*) I want Levkin out of this house! Him and his damned sister— both of them! As soon as Otto gets back I'm going to insist they pack their bags tonight— (*The door from the house slams open and FLORA storms in, in an ugly mood. She makes straight for MAGGIE.*)

FLORA: Maggie! I think it's time you and I had a few words— I hear you and Edmund have been having some marvellous discussion about my future—

EDMUND: Flora—

FLORA: Well, understand this: I'm sick and tired of people interfering in my affairs! It's about time you remembered that you're a servant in this house— not my governess!

EDMUND: Flora, may I say something—

FLORA: (*still to MAGGIE*) I know all about you, Maggie Magistretti—

EDMUND: —I want you to try and forgive me for what happened—

FLORA: (*still to MAGGIE*) Just because you lent me that money it doesn't mean you own me, you know. You only did it to try and prove you used to be a woman, once upon a time. Well, I'm a woman now— probably more than you'll ever be— and I'm going to behave like one!

EDMUND: Flora, I want to apologise most humbly. What I did was inexcusable— I don't know what came over me—

FLORA: (*rounding on him*) Don't you? Then I think it's time you got wise to yourself before you really do some damage. Maggie can probably put you on to a psychoanalyst— and pay for the treatment too if you ask her nicely.

(*She brandishes the money, which is still lying on the table.*)

MAGGIE: (*sharply*) Flora— be quiet—

FLORA: Do you know he offered me a bed at his place? Well, that's a joke for a start. When it comes to kissing, I'm afraid Uncle Edmund's a bit out of practice—

EDMUND: Flora, I beg you— don't talk in that ugly, cruel way—

FLORA: You'd better face it, you know, I'm not your Alice in Wonderland any more. I'm going to do what I want from now on, and what's wrong with that? Who doesn't do what they want? Except you because you probably can't. Well, that's your problem.

EDMUND: Flora, please—

FLORA: Go home, you're ridiculous, go back to your obscene photos.

MAGGIE: Flora, go to your room—

FLORA: Don't you tell me what to do! God, you make me sick, the pair of you! How dare you sit in judgment on me like a couple of pious parents with their naughty little girl! (*She points at MAGGIE*)

You don't know about her, do you? This quiet bitch? You don't know how she's lived here year after year and watched it all, every beastly thing that happened in this house. Oh, she's innocent, look at her, she never did anything, she never said anything, not to us anyway; watching us go through hell, that's how she got her fun. Then up she'd go to Lydia and they'd talk and talk— till finally she was the only one she'd let in, did you know that? She sat there dying, holding Maggie's hand! You escaped it all,

didn't you, you smug bitch! And all because you don't attract men!

EDMUND: Flora, enough! Go to your room!

FLORA: You're two of a kind, you two. Why don't you take her back to London with you? I'm sure she wouldn't mind that you're probably impotent!—

(MAGGIE slaps her face hard.)

MAGGIE: (*strongly*) Go to your room!

FLORA: You bitch! You'll pay for that—

(*She goes for MAGGIE with the scissors.*)

EDMUND: Flora!

MAGGIE: Flora, no!

(FLORA and MAGGIE struggle. For a moment it seems that she might have stabbed MAGGIE in the neck. But the two draw apart, and it is seen that FLORA has sheered off MAGGIE'S bun of hair at the nape of her neck. MAGGIE puts her hand to her neck and cringes, shoulders hunched, as if naked. FLORA, crying, stands for a moment holding the hair as if it were a snake. OTTO appears at the window. He is a figure, suddenly, of surprising authority.)

OTTO: What the hell is going on?

(FLORA rushes out on to the lawn. OTTO quickly sizing up the situation, grabs her arm.)

FLORA: (*struggling*) Let me go!

(OTTO slaps her hand. She roars with pain and indignation.)

OTTO: Be quiet, child! I want an explanation.

EDMUND: (*who has followed FLORA out*) Look, Otto, it's nothing—

FLORA: Explanation? You fool, you fool! Ask that pretty boy of yours! Ask him who seduces your daughter, ask him who's in bed with your wife while you're with that slut! Don't you know, he's a devil, devil, devil!—

(*She becomes incoherent with enraged tears. OTTO says nothing; FLORA becomes still, suddenly terrified.*)

OTTO: What are you saying, exactly?

FLORA: It's nothing, I was just— You're hurting me.

(*He has hold of her arm.*)

OTTO: Flora, I asked you what you said.

EDMUND: Otto, please—

OTTO: Shut up! Flora.

FLORA: Let go my arm!

OTTO: Repeat what you said.

FLORA: (*almost matter-of-fact*) David is mummy's lover.

(OTTO lets her go.)

OTTO: You too, you said?

FLORA: Yes, me too. Oh, you are so stupid . . .

(OTTO stares down at the ground. His face wrinkles up in anguish or perplexity. FLORA sobs quietly; MAGGIE picks up her bun of hair from the floor as if in a dream; EDMUND watches OTTO. In the workshop DAVID waits, sitting alert and upright on the tomb, his face peaceful, almost radiant. At his feet, ELSA is stretched out on the floor like a cat, half sitting, half lying, with one elbow on his knee. OTTO moves to the workshop and opens the door.)

DAVID: It is true, my Lord.

OTTO: All true, David?

DAVID: All true, my Lord.

(OTTO advances menacingly. DAVID backs away.)

Goodnight, sweet ladies—

(EDMUND enters the workshop.)

EDMUND: Otto, don't!

(*He moves to stop OTTO. At the same moment ISABEL rushes in, flourishing the will.*)

ISABEL: Otto, look— look! I've got it!

(OTTO turns towards her. The penny drops for EDMUND.)

EDMUND: Oh, my God! Isabel, look out!

(*He rushes to interpose himself between them, heaving her*



across to the side of him furthest away from OTTO. OTTO draws back his fist.)

OTTO: You've had this coming long enough!

(He strikes. EDMUND falls to the ground and lies motionless. ISABEL screams and falls on her knees, weeping hysterically. MAGGIE and FLORA run into the workshop, adding a torrent of Italian and more tears to the confusion.)

OTTO: (shouting at them) I've had enough, do you hear! (rounding on DAVID and ELSA) And I've bloody well had enough of you two as well!

(He starts man-handling them towards the door.)

Bitch! Crud! Whore! Get out! Clear out, you filthy pimp, and take that witch with you! You've destroyed me—you've destroyed us all! Get out, you demons, you devils, or by Christ I'll tear you to pieces!

(He drives them away, like a Rubens Christ cleaning up the temple, while ELSA pleads to stay, ISABEL decides at the top of her voice that if DAVID goes she will kill herself, and FLORA howls. Meanwhile MAGGIE has examined the body of EDMUND and then turned on OTTO with a great pummeling of little fists and a steady stream of Italian. OTTO holding her at arm's length with one hand while he directs the eviction of the LEVKINS with the other. When the LEVKINS have gone, the noise of the three WOMEN continues for a moment while OTTO collects himself. Then he lets out a single great roar.)

OTTO: Shut up!

(Silence.)

Piss off, the three of you, or by Christ—

(They go. The stage is left to OTTO victorious, and EDMUND, vanquished. OTTO, bemused by his success, not yet sure in what the success consists or whether it may in fact turn out to be another failure, looks about him. Suddenly he notices the body lying on the ground.)

OTTO: Ed! Oh, my God . . .

(He bends over the BODY and starts to drag it towards the workshop.)

The lights fade.

## ACT TWO Scene Fourteen

(The workshop. It is the following morning. OTTO is sitting on the tomb. He tips the remaining champagne from a bottle into his tumbler and drinks most of it. There is a groan from behind the bed-curtain. OTTO scrambles to his feet. EDMUND appears. His suit is crumpled. One eye is closed and a bluish black stain covers much of his face. He moves slowly and cautiously.)

OTTO: Ed, old man, are you all right?

EDMUND: Not specially.

(He sits down carefully.)

OTTO: Maggie doesn't think anything's broken. My God, though, it's a shiner, isn't it?

EDMUND: I can't see it from here.

OTTO: Would you like anything on it? A bit of raw beef, or half an orange or something?

EDMUND: Have you got any aspirin?

OTTO: Asprin.

(He shambles round looking for aspirin.)

Got a headache, have you?

(EDMUND tries to look at his watch, holding it at various angles and distances.)

Perhaps it's those knockout drops I gave you.

EDMUND: What knockout drops?

OTTO: Some stuff Lydia used to take. She swore by it. I gave you a double dose in case it had—gone off a bit, you know. Lost its potency.

EDMUND: Could it be five to one?

OTTO: Five past eleven more likely. Here you are.

EDMUND: Thanks.

(He gives EDMUND some aspirins. EDMUND swallows them. OTTO gives him his tumbler of champagne. EDMUND drinks it.)

OTTO: That better?

EDMUND: Let's give it thirty seconds, shall we? Have I been here all night? Otto, you didn't sleep on this thing?

(OTTO drops the empty bottle into a crate and takes out a new one which he begins to open.)

OTTO: No, I used your bed.

EDMUND: What are you celebrating?

OTTO: What? Oh, *this*. No, the fact is I'm off whisky.

EDMUND: You've gone off it?

OTTO: I've come off it. I made the decision last night. It was taking me over, you know.

EDMUND: Don't tell me Lydia kept crates of champagne in the cellar.

OTTO: No, no, I went out and got it this morning. Champagne's the only stuff you can drink all day without ill effects, it's a well known fact.

EDMUND: What happened last night?

OTTO: I hit you, Ed.

EDMUND: I know that, you idiot.

OTTO: I thought for a minute I'd done you in. I don't know what came over me.

EDMUND: I know the feeling. Then what happened?

OTTO: I seemed to be set upon by hundreds of hysterical women; why I didn't slay the lot of them there and then is a mystery to me. You were well out of it, Ed.

EDMUND: Very considerate of you. Did you hit anyone else?

OTTO: No, only you. You were enough somehow.

EDMUND: So I've finally been of some use . . .

OTTO: I think so, Ed. Bashing you gave me a tremendous sense of release—at last. Suddenly, I knew what I had to do—get rid of those two—demons, or whatever they were. And I knew I could do it, as well. There was no decision involved, just a terrific all-embracing wrath that carried me along. For a minute or two I felt like God. Then I put you to bed and went up to see Isabel.

EDMUND: Rather a dangerous thing to do, wasn't it? Even for God.

OTTO: Especially for God. But I didn't care. That was the moment to kill her if I was going to. I had to give myself the chance.

EDMUND: And what happened?

OTTO: Well, I didn't, did I? No, she soon brought me back to earth.

EDMUND: Did you talk?

OTTO: She did. She tied my hands most effectively as soon as I entered the room by imploring me to put her out of her misery. Almost as dirty a trick as turning the other cheek. And having disarmed me she—opened herself up.

EDMUND: How do you mean?

OTTO: It was an experience, I can tell you. It was as if for the last twenty-odd years she'd been stuffing a great sack full of everything she ever thought or felt about me; and last night she took a knife and—

(He mimes slashing it open.)

And what came out, Ed, was a monster. And it was me, and yet—my God, it wasn't me, it *couldn't* be . . . I thought I hated myself . . .

EDMUND: (hopefully) So you've—forgiven her?

OTTO: Bloody hell I have.

EDMUND: After all, she's done nothing you haven't.



OTTO: What's that got to do with it?  
 EDMUND: Well, be logical . . .  
 OTTO: Logical? What's so logical about forgiveness? I blame myself, don't I? You don't object to that. So why shouldn't blame *her*?  
 EDMUND: Have it your own way. I'm not going to argue—not with this headache.  
*(He gets up and fetches his coat.)*  
 OTTO: *(sympathetic)* No, of course not.  
 EDMUND: By the way, what about Elsa?  
 OTTO: What about her?  
 EDMUND: What will she do, now that you've thrown her out?  
 OTTO: Why ask me?  
 EDMUND: I thought you said she had no one else but you?  
 OTTO: Well, it was your idea to kick her out.  
 EDMUND: Yes, I suppose it was. Well, I think perhaps I'll try and catch that five o'clock train. Go back and nurse my wounds . . .  
*(He puts on his coat.)*  
 OTTO: I'm sorry, Ed—  
 EDMUND: Don't be a fool, I didn't mean that. Anyway, all the excitement's over now, I imagine, so . . .  
 OTTO: Not quite all, actually.  
 EDMUND: What?  
 OTTO: The will's turned up.  
 EDMUND: Where?  
*(OTTO is sitting on it.)*  
 OTTO: Here.  
 EDMUND: I thought you'd looked.  
 OTTO: We had. I'll read it to you. It's short enough. 'I hereby will and bequeath all of which I die possessed to my beloved . . .  
*(He pauses.)*  
 and faithful . . .  
*(He pauses.)*  
 EDMUND: *Otto . . .*  
 OTTO: Friend . . .  
 EDMUND: Maggie?  
*(OTTO nods, rises and gives the will to EDMUND who glances at it, looks at OTTO, then jerks his head in the direction of the house. They move purposefully towards the door as the lights fade.)*

## ACT TWO Scene Fifteen

*Isabel's room.*

ISABEL *soberly dressed, sits in an armchair, looking small and tired, and rather sour. OTTO leans against the mantel like a piece of ruined statuary, and EDMUND, caressing his eye occasionally, paces by the window. It is evening.*  
 ISABEL: Interesting, isn't it, how a threat to property reconstitutes family life. I wonder if her ladyship will keep us waiting long.  
 OTTO: She knows we're here?  
 ISABEL: Of course.  
 EDMUND: Should I knock on her door, d'you think?  
 ISABEL: I daresay that's just what she wants, for us to go running after her.  
 EDMUND: Oh, come, Isabel, be charitable.  
 ISABEL: Edmund, if you insist on preaching after all that's happened, you'd better do it to *her*. She's the one to dispense charity from now on. I for one have nothing left to give.  
 OTTO: Of course there's no reason to suppose that Maggie'll want to make any changes. After all, she's lived here all her life, this is her home. I expect she'll just tell

us she wants everything to carry on exactly as before, and I'm prepared to respect her wishes.

EDMUND: I agree.

ISABEL: *(incredulously)* Carry on as before?

OTTO: *(mumbling)* Well, in a manner of speaking.

ISABEL: in a manner of speaking you're out of your mind.

EDMUND: I think the least we assume is that Maggie will show some consideration and decency and ignore the will.

OTTO: Exactly.

EDMUND: Don't forget she brought us up, Otto and me. She was a second mother to us. She *loves* this family, she *must* do.

OTTO: Anyway, Maggie's an intelligent girl, she must see that the will's a bit *odd*—

EDMUND: Of course. It's ludicrous. Poor Maggie, she's probably as embarrassed about it as we are.

ISABEL: I think you must both be mad.

*(She gets up and goes to the pile of logs by EDMUND's feet. EDMUND jumps involuntarily.)*

What are you jumping for? I'm not going to put *you* on the fire.

*(She crouches to build up the fire, punctuating her speech with the crash of logs.)*

One: I see nothing odd about the will. Lydia hated us as much as we hated her, so why should she leave us anything? Maggie was the only person she cared for, so Maggie's got the lot, that's not odd, it's logical. Two—

EDMUND: There *is* a question of blood, Isabel—

ISABEL: Your first mother left it to your second mother, does that sound better to you? Two: I don't know why you think you and your brother are so irresistibly lovable. Poverty and Lydia were all that kept Maggie in this—hell's kitchen. Now they're both removed she'll take off, and why the hell shouldn't she? She'll go on a world cruise, buy herself a husband.

EDMUND: Oh, come, come—

ISABEL: Come come! Suddenly you're both talking about her as though she's one of the family. She never was, and you know it. Maggie's just been part of the property, a family asset. Now the boot's on the other foot; Maggie owns the property, and we're certainly no asset, so she'll get rid of us like so much unwanted furniture. Coldly, politely and without a scrap of remorse she'll clear us out.  
 EDMUND: Nonsense, Isabel, I have great faith in Maggie's loyalty and integrity.

ISABEL: What! After living with us all her life!

EDMUND: If one can depend on nothing else in the world one can depend on Maggie!

ISABEL: Wait and see. Money isn't just bottles of whisky and servants and houses, you know. It's personality. It makes people. I daresay *your* personality could benefit from a pound or two more in your pocket.

OTTO: Bloody rubbish. Money isn't everything.

ISABEL: Then what's keeping you here? And what do you think kept me in this house for years? I used to think it was habit. It was money. Money was Lydia's power-house; and her meanness with it was part of her power; it kept us small, small and manageable.

EDMUND: I don't think this kind of talk is going to do anyone any good . . . *Is there much actual money?*

ISABEL: Pots.

EDMUND: What about the workshop, Otto, does it pay its way?

OTTO: Well no, actually it's had to be sort of subsidised . . .

ISABEL: It seems I shall have to go into domestic service. If I'm capable of it. I wonder if Maggie will give me a reference.



EDMUND: Isabel, do you have any asprin up here?  
 ISABEL: Yes, of course. Poor Edmund, how are you feeling?  
 EDMUND: Pretty terrible, thanks.  
 (ISABEL finds him some aspirin.)  
 OTTO: Oh, how can Lydia have been so bloody tiresome! (There is a knock at the door.)  
 ISABEL: Come in—  
 EDMUND: Come in—  
 OTTO: Come in—  
 (MAGGIE enters. OTTO and EDMUND beam at her and give her a loud and effusive welcome.)  
 OTTO: Ah!  
 EDMUND: Maggie!  
 ISABEL: Do come in, Maggie.  
 MAGGIE: Thank you . . .  
 (MAGGIE moves into the room. OTTO and EDMUND collide, rushing forward to offer her a chair. She sits down, and waits with a kind of biting calm. After a moment ISABEL coughs.)  
 OTTO: Well, Maggie, I think you know why we've summoned you . . .  
 (MAGGIE looks at him.)  
 I mean, it's perfectly all right, of course . . . That is to say, we thought you might want to let us know something about—  
 MAGGIE: My intentions?  
 OTTO: (deflated) Your intentions, yes . . .  
 (He retreats, in some disorder. MAGGIE is calm, quiet, dignified and sour.)  
 MAGGIE: Now, what would interest you . . . ? I have no immediate plans, apart from winding up my affairs here, of course. After that I intend to go back to Italy.  
 OTTO: Back to Italy?  
 MAGGIE: Of course, why not?  
 ISABEL: For good?  
 MAGGIE: For good.  
 ISABEL: Why not?  
 OTTO: I see. We rather thought— you can imagine, my mother's will came as rather a surprise to us.  
 MAGGIE: Really?  
 OTTO: Yes. We rather expected— I mean— there is usually some sort of— family provision, isn't there?  
 MAGGIE: Is there?  
 OTTO: Well . . . (pause) Maggie, I hate this sort of thing. Look, let's forget the— actual— money for the moment—  
 MAGGIE: Very well.  
 OTTO: For the moment. As to the house and contents, what do you propose to do?  
 MAGGIE: Naturally I would give you first refusal.  
 ISABEL: I told you so.  
 (She goes to the gramophone.)  
 OTTO: You mean, you're offering to sell me the house?  
 MAGGIE: Well, that would only be proper, wouldn't it?  
 OTTO: Yes, I suppose so. Unfortunately I'm in no position to buy it. Oh, God . . . (he begins to laugh)  
 ISABEL: In short, you propose to take everything.  
 MAGGIE: Yes. Why not?  
 ISABEL: Over to you, Edmund. Why not?  
 EDMUND: You don't mean a word of this, Maggie. You're teasing us.  
 MAGGIE: If you think so, there's nothing more I can say. (She gets up.)  
 EDMUND: But it's not like you! Surely you'll come to some kind of civilised arrangement with Otto?  
 MAGGIE: Give him some of my property, you mean? Is

that what civilised people do, give away their property? I hadn't noticed.  
 EDMUND: But you can't take advantage of Lydia's will, it was mad and unjust, you must see that.  
 MAGGIE: Not mad. Unjust, perhaps. But then life is unjust. At least I have always found it so, Edmund.  
 ISABEL: Oh, don't argue with her.  
 (ISABEL goes to a chest of drawers and begins to throw piles of white nylon underwear out on to the floor.)  
 OTTO: What are you doing?  
 ISABEL: Packing. I've had enough.  
 EDMUND: Look, Maggie—  
 MAGGIE: My name is not Maggie. It is Maria Magistretti.  
 EDMUND: I just don't understand . . .  
 ISABEL: Then you must be bloody thick. It's nothing to do with justice, nothing ever is. That bitch has the money, it's as simple as that. Leave it there and stop playing into her hands.  
 EDMUND: I will not leave it there! Look, Maggie, you can't behave like this after we've trusted and relied on you all these years! It's not fair!  
 (His voice has risen to the whine of an aggrieved child. At the end of this petulant outburst he stamps his foot.)  
 MAGGIE: How can you talk to me about fairness! 'All these years' have been mine, as well as yours, you know. I've given half my life to this house. Do you call that fair?  
 ISABEL: You were paid, weren't you?  
 MAGGIE: (with a bitter smile) Oh yes, I got my— pocket money. And you got your money's worth, I think. Now I shall get mine.  
 ISABEL: Oh, I'm sure you will! Your selfless devotion to Lydia has paid off at last. All those months by her bedside making up to her when you hated her as much as we did— just waiting for her to die—  
 MAGGIE: That is a disgusting thing to say. I kept her company because I was fond of her, and because none of her family bothered. They were all too busy with their sordid affairs—  
 OTTO: Maggie, don't speak to my wife like that—  
 ISABEL: Don't be ridiculous, Otto. Your time for gallantry is past.  
 EDMUND: Look, no one's suggesting you get nothing. There's plenty for all of us. It's only a matter of coming to a decent arrangement—  
 MAGGIE: (coolly) Why should I give any of you money?  
 EDMUND: It's not a question of giving us anything! Damn it, she was our mother, not yours! God knows, I got little else out of her— and I need the money, look at my suit!  
 ISABEL: Never mind. We'll contest the will. We'll prove she was insane—  
 EDMUND: Maggie, can't you see you owe it to us? You have a responsibility to this family! We took you into our house—looked after you—treated you as one of us—  
 MAGGIE: No! You never did that, never! You used me or ignored me, nothing else. I was the Italian girl, one of many, who fed you and humoured you and cleared up your messes or pretended not to notice them.  
 OTTO: Now look here, Maggie—  
 MAGGIE: I owe you nothing! You sucked me dry, all of you, you smothered me and sucked me dry.  
 (She puts a hand to the nape of her neck.)  
 Well, it's over. Now I'm free. The next child I humour will be mine, I can promise you that.  
 ISABEL: Yours? Don't make me laugh. You barren witch!  
 MAGGIE: (furiously) If there is anything else you want, I shall be in my attic.  
 (She moves towards the door.)



EDMUND: Maggie, come back!

*(They all begin talking at once—OTTO shouting at them to be quiet, EDMUND pleading with MAGGIE, and ISABEL continuing her insults. The door is suddenly flung open before MAGGIE reaches it. FLORA appears. She looks wildly around the room.)*

FLORA: Here they are, here they are! They're in here!

*(She comes into the room. Behind her comes DAVID; he is carrying ELSA in his arms; they are both dripping wet. ISABEL has retreated, stumbling into a pile of underclothes. OTTO is shrunk, bent, covering his mouth with his hands. DAVID holds out ELSA'S body to OTTO.)*

DAVID: She is dead, my Elsa. She was in the pool. Take her then, she is yours. You have done this. Take her, my Lord Otto . . .

FLORA: Take her, take her, why should you escape!

*(She begins crying hysterically. OTTO takes ELSA'S body automatically in his arms and then, as if the weight is too much for him, his head drops, his knees give way and he kneels on the floor and buries his head in her dripping clothes.)*

OTTO: No, no, no, no, . . .

ISABEL: *(crying)* Get her out of here . . . I don't want her here . . .

DAVID: Why not? She belongs here, yes, with the dead. Dead, dead . . .

*(He moans.)*

Nothing to say to her, you dead people? Then burn. Here, I help you burn, I burn all! . . .

*(He kicks at the red hot embers of the fire, throwing the burning logs across the room, demented.)*

FLORA: *(shouting hysterically)* That's right, burn, burn, burn them! . . . Burn it all up, burn it! . . .

*(ISABEL screams. Tongues of flame begin to leap up. DAVID is shouting incoherently. OTTO is sobbing.)*

EDMUND: Stop it, please, please stop it! I can't stand any more.

*(With a cry he runs from the room, which becomes enveloped in smoke and flames.)*

*The lights fade.*

## ACT TWO Scene Sixteen

*The workshop, next morning.*

*(The blackened shell of Isabel's room is visible throughout the scene. EDMUND enters from the lawn. Almost at the same time DAVID emerges from the inner room. He carries a battered suitcase and one of his hands is bandaged.)*

DAVID: *(after a pause)* You are wanting to see your brother?

EDMUND: Yes.

DAVID: He will be here presently.

EDMUND: I'll come back.

DAVID: One moment, please . . . I am glad you are here. I as just going, as you see. I have to ask something.

EDMUND: What is it?

DAVID: I ask you to bury my sister.

EDMUND: To . . .

DAVID: It will be no trouble to you.

EDMUND: Do you want a Jewish— burial?

DAVID: What else? The synagogue will arrange all. If you ask for the Rabbi he will explain. I do not wish my Lord Otto to be troubled with it, and I— I . . . do not wish . . . Here is money.

EDMUND: David— I'm sorry . . .

DAVID: You will not?

EDMUND: Of course I will, of course . . .

DAVID: Good, then that is done. I am very grateful to you. *(He picks up the suitcase and moves to the door.)*

Yes, that is all now.

EDMUND: Where are you going? Back south to your people?

DAVID: South? No, no. I am going home. To the true North. To Leningrad.

EDMUND: But I thought you said—

DAVID: No, Mr Edmund, that was a fairy tale. Alas, I am not from Golders Green, but from Leningrad only.

EDMUND: Was it all true, then, what— Elsa said?

DAVID: That we ran away? Oh, yes. All true. Just like she said.

EDMUND: And your—father was shot?

DAVID: In the stomach, to be exact.

EDMUND: Then why did you lie about it?

DAVID: Would you wear such a story around your neck? You don't know how I hated my father, for putting such a story on me. I did not want to be a tragic man. I wanted to be free of it, to live in the light as I told you. Well, so much for that as the saying is. I am a joke here, a clown, some man's toy. Even my grief . . . *grief* is a joke here. My mouth goes down, see?

*(He pulls the corners of his mouth down.)*

EDMUND: But you can't go back to Russia now.

DAVID: Why not?

EDMUND: You can't even afford the fare, for God's sake.

*(DAVID holds up his hand. On his fingers are Elsa's rings.)*

DAVID: You forget these.

EDMUND: They're real?

DAVID: Of course. How could you think they were not? You are a simple man, Mr Edmund. I tell you diamonds are glass and you see glass. I say there is a light Jew and a dark Jew and you see a light Jew and a dark Jew. There is no light and dark Jew! Just a Jew. I knew she was a doomed child. I knew I should be caught in the end, through her. . . .

EDMUND: David, I think you might regret this. Come and stay with me and think it over. Give yourself time—

*(He sits and writes his address in his notebook.)*

DAVID: I shall be your toy now?

EDMUND *(tearing out the page)*: Here is my address—

*(He hands it to DAVID and notices the bandage.)*

How are your hands?

DAVID: It is nothing. So I burn the room a little, I burn my hands a little—it does not bring her back.

*(He suddenly embraces EDMUND.)*

Goodbye, Lord Edmund. I go through the window like my sister.

*(The piece of paper flutters to the floor as he goes out.)*

EDMUND stoops to pick it up. OTTO enters silently behind him.)

OTTO: Ed, I want to tell you something—

EDMUND *(startled)*: Oh, my God!

OTTO: I dreamt last night there was an enormous bird in the house. I think it was a kite—

EDMUND *(wearily)*: A vulture.

OTTO: What? Well, anyway it was following me about trailing its wings after it like a sort of train, I could hear them dragging on the floor behind me. I ran to the telephone, but it was made of butterscotch—

EDMUND: Otto, I'm going—

OTTO: Oh, you're off too are you?

EDMUND: I thought I'd try and catch the afternoon train. That is, unless there's something I can do.

OTTO: I can't think of anything, thank you very much.

EDMUND: I hate to leave you like this.



OTTO: Oh, I'll be all right, as long as I can get to the greengrocers. And I've just found out how to bake potatoes. All you do—

EDMUND: I know, Otto. I've baked many potatoes.

OTTO: You know Isabel's going too?

EDMUND: Yes, I'm sorry.

OTTO: No need to be sorry. It was high time. The machine's running down at last. You remember I told you I wanted to be able to suffer simply, like an animal? Well, it's come. I've gone to earth. Everything's been stripped away. I don't want anything any more, I don't feel anything any more. I don't even want to drink. Do you think I'll stay like this?

EDMUND: I don't know, Otto.

OTTO: Do you remember that great slab of marble over there?

EDMUND: Father's, you mean?

OTTO: Mm. He never dared start on it either. You can't just chip around with a chunk like that to pass the time away, you've got to know what the hell you're looking for under there. D'you know what happened this morning? I was sitting around and suddenly I picked up the biggest bloody chisel I've got and went over and stood in front of that thing. I wanted either to make something really great, or smash it to smithereens. But in the end I just stood there—looking at it.

EDMUND: What does that prove?

OTTO: Everyone's going, aren't they, Ed? It'll just be me, alone in the house, with that.

EDMUND: Perhaps we've changed places. Maybe you're the one that watches.

OTTO (*absorbed in the stone*): What one that watches?

EDMUND: Never mind. Otto, before I go, I want you, if you can, to forgive me for running off.

OTTO: Running off where?

EDMUND: From Isabel's room last night when Elsa—I want—

OTTO: I didn't notice.

EDMUND: Otto, I want you to forgive me for—

OTTO: I tell you I didn't notice. Anyway, it's nothing to do with me.

(*He touches the stone gently.*)

EDMUND, *excluded*, moves wearily to the door.)

EDMUND: Goodbye, Otto.

OTTO: Look after yourself.

(*EDMUND goes out on to the lawn and looks into the kitchen window. OTTO is still staring at the stone. FLORA comes on to the lawn. She has her hair up and looks smart, in Lydia's dress.*)

FLORA: Hello, Edmund.

EDMUND: Oh. . . . You haven't seen Maggie have you?

FLORA: I heard her scuttling about in her attic, packing, I suppose. But that was an hour ago.

EDMUND (*staring at her*): Flora you look. . . .

FLORA: I know. Mother said she didn't want it after all. So you're leaving, Edmund?

EDMUND: Yes, shortly. Flora—

(*She turns to him.*)

Will you forgive me?

FLORA (*indifferently*): Will I forgive you? Yes, I forgive you. I forgive you, I forgive you. Why not?

(*FLORA goes into the workshop.*)

EDMUND goes into the kitchen.

As FLORA enters the workshop OTTO is just about to begin work, possibly, for he has taken up a chisel and mallet. FLORA speaks in a shrill, precise voice.)

FLORA: I have decided to stay at home and look after you.

OTTO: Yes. Yes, thank you, Lydia.

(*The mallet falls from his hand and he sinks slowly on to the tomb, as FLORA collects his whisky bottles and marches into the inner room.*)

*The lights fade in the workshop and come up in the kitchen.)*

## ACT TWO Scene Seventeen

(*The kitchen.*)

EDMUND is sitting despondently at the table. He jumps as the door opens. It is ISABEL.)

ISABEL: Ah, here you are. I was looking for you to say goodbye.

EDMUND: You're going already?

ISABEL: No point in drawing things out, is there? I hope I don't look too much like the rat deserting the sinking ship.

EDMUND: No, of course not. . . .

ISABEL: How kind you are. I saw David leaving just now. He looked a bit like an unsuccessful brush salesman, with his cardboard suitcase. Gone to try the next street.

EDMUND: He didn't—?

ISABEL: No, he didn't see me. Mercifully. I wonder where he'll go. America, to make a brash fortune? Or set up as a pimp somewhere, do you think? He might make a very good pimp, if he can avoid spoiling the goods for the customers.

EDMUND: Don't be bitter, Isabel.

ISABEL: Edmund, please don't tell me what to be. I have to deal with this in my own way.

(*She sits down, takes off her wedding ring and puts it in her handbag.*)

EDMUND: I'm sorry.

ISABEL: Are you shocked, that I'm leaving Otto?

EDMUND: No, of course not. I just want you both to be happy. What will you do now?

ISABEL: Go back home to Scotland, to my father. He always detested Otto, so someone will be pleased.

EDMUND: Will you get a job?

ISABEL: Sit down Edmund, you're blocking all the light. I've got something to tell you, actually. Do tuck your long legs out of the way.

(*EDMUND shifts into another chair.*)

EDMUND: What is it?

ISABEL: I'm going to have a baby.

EDMUND: Oh, God!

ISABEL: Don't look so worried, I shan't ask you to deliver it.

EDMUND: Is it David's?

ISABEL: Of course.

EDMUND: Do you want it?

ISABEL: What do you think? It'll be mine, as Flora never was, absolutely mine.

EDMUND: Hm. . . .

ISABEL: I'm not asking for your blessing.

EDMUND: You have it anyway; for what it's worth.

ISABEL: You're looking ill, Edmund.

EDMUND: Am I?

ISABEL: You're not going to pass out or anything, are you?

EDMUND: Why should I do that? All I've got is a black eye.

ISABEL: That's true. Dear safe Edmund, forever untouched. Edmund. . . .

EDMUND: Yes?



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ISABEL: Fathers are not vital, but they have their uses. On the premises, I mean. You wouldn't consider marriage, would you?

EDMUND: Marriage?

ISABEL: Oh, dear, now I have shocked you.

EDMUND: Are you joking?

ISABEL: Luckily the last thing I expected was a gallant answer. And don't blush so—though I must say it makes you look quite attractive with the remains of that black eye—a sort of wine-stained effect. . . . Well, I'm off—

EDMUND: Isabel, please forgive me. . . .

ISABEL: For heavens sake don't keep apologising. *(She kisses him.)* Goodbye, Edmund. You know, I really think you ought to sit down. *(She moves to the door.)* Goodbye. . . .

*(She goes.)*

EDMUND, left alone, stares at the empty room, picks up a wood block from the table and moves slowly out on to the lawn.)

## ACT TWO Scene Eighteen

*(The lawn, pool and kitchen.)*

EDMUND looks round at the desolate garden in the fading afternoon light. He walks down the weed-choked path to the pool, gazes at it for a long moment, then turns up his coat collar, hunches his shoulders against the cold and crouches on the bank, brooding and pale. MAGGIE comes out of the house. She stops on seeing him.)

MAGGIE: Edmund.

*(He doesn't stir. She moves nearer.)*

I've been looking for you. I thought you'd like to know I've decided to let Otto have the house and split the rest three ways, if that's agreeable to you.

EDMUND: That's very generous of you.

*(Something in his tone disturbs Maggie.)*

MAGGIE: What are you doing here?

*(No answer. She takes a step nearer.)*

What's the matter?

*(He looks up for the first time.)*

Why don't you come into the house? It's warm in the kitchen.

EDMUND: I can't. Not just now.

*(He puts the smooth face of the wood block to his cheek.)*

MAGGIE: What have you got there?

*(He suddenly stretches out his arm and proffers the block to her. She touches it.)*

EDMUND *(harshly)*: Perfect, isn't it?

MAGGIE: Are you going to use it?

EDMUND *(looking round at the undergrowth)*: On all this? No! I don't want to spoil the block. It's just a jungle, now, isn't it? It's all changed. There's no rhyme or reason in it any more. I suppose it's all gone back to the way it's meant to be. You can hardly see the path any more.

MAGGIE: It needs clearing. It wouldn't take long.

EDMUND: It wouldn't take long to grow again. No, I don't think one should touch it. . . .

*(He stares at the water. MAGGIE watches him closely.)*

You don't have to hang about here, you know, Maggie. I shan't throw myself in.

MAGGIE: Why should you do that?

*(She sits beside him.)*

How long are you going to stay here?

EDMUND: I can't get it out of my mind that while we were having that dreadful quarrel over the money, Elsa was floating in there; as if they were connected somehow.

MAGGIE: That's not possible, is it?

EDMUND: It was my idea that Otto should kick Elsa out, remember? Everything I do seems to come out wrong! And I've come to the conclusion that I haven't really the ability to do anything at all; and that I might as well accept it; and that the most sensible thing I've ever done in this house was last night, when I ran away.

*(MAGGIE tries to interrupt. He gets up.)*

It's no good, Maggie, I've made up my mind—to stay away from things I can't cope with. I shall go back to my—what did Flora call it?

MAGGIE: To lock yourself up quietly?

EDMUND: Hm? Yes, that's right. One must accept one's—no, not 'one must'; I shall accept my limitations.

*(He pulls his coat collar tighter round his neck and braces himself against the cold. MAGGIE does not take her eyes off him.)*

EDMUND: You'd better go back.

*(She doesn't move.)*

Go on. I'll follow.

MAGGIE: I've lost my shoe.

*(She gets up and looks round on the ground, her hands pushed tightly into her raincoat pockets.)*

I can't find it anywhere.

EDMUND: Whereabouts did you lose it?

MAGGIE: It's no good, I've looked. It may have fallen in the water.

EDMUND: What colour was it?

MAGGIE: Like this. What does it matter.

EDMUND: Well. . . .

*(MAGGIE waits. EDMUND stares at her.)*

MAGGIE: I don't think I can get back without it.

EDMUND: No, of course not. . . . What can we do.

MAGGIE: I'm afraid you'll have to carry me.

EDMUND: I'm not sure I can.

MAGGIE *(drily)*: You can try, perhaps, I'm quite light.

EDMUND: Yes . . . well. . . .

*(He moves towards her. They stand facing each other awkwardly.)*

MAGGIE waits impassively.)

If you don't mind?

MAGGIE: I don't mind.

*(EDMUND picks her up, and pauses for a moment.)*

Do you think you can manage?

EDMUND: Yes. . . .

*(He carries her slowly up the path to the lawn. The sunset deepens. Rooks are cawing. He sets her gently down on the grass by the door to the kitchen.)*

MAGGIE: Thank you. I was not too heavy for you?

EDMUND: No. You're amazingly light, Maggie.

MAGGIE *(quietly)*: Maria.

EDMUND: What did you say?

MAGGIE: Nothing. It doesn't matter.

*(She goes into the kitchen. The shoe on her foot is damp so she takes it off and puts it on the kitchen table. Then, with a shrug, she takes the other shoe out of her raincoat pocket and places it beside the first, making a neat pair on the table. She kneels by a chest and takes out some clothes to pack, not knowing that EDMUND has followed her to the kitchen w*

*He now comes slowly to the table, staring fixedly at the shoes, and holds them out to her*

EDMUND: Maggie!

MAGGIE *(she looks up at him)*: Very clever, have I?



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## THE ITALIAN GIRL—from page 62

EDMUND: You haven't!

(Suddenly he begins to laugh. Their eyes meet and MAGGIE smiles back. He perches on the edge of the table.)

Maggie. . . . When I was seventeen and we played the kidnapping game, we always took the same route, didn't we? The Via Aurelia—Genova, Pisa, Livorno, Grosseto, Civitavecchia, Roma. . . . Would you let me take you there? (MAGGIE perches on the table beside him.)

MAGGIE: I should be honoured. You were very beautiful,

Edmund, when you were seventeen.

EDMUND: Maggie, how did it go—that song? I can never remember the end. 'La strada . . . del bosco. . . .'

MAGGIE (joining in):

. . . del bosco,

L'e large l'e lunga l'e stretta,

E fatt' alla barchetta—

E fatta per fare . . .

(EDMUND bites into an apple.)

MAGGIE: amor. . . .

(The lights fade.)

CURTAIN

## THE BELLS—from page 19

while the burgomaster's parlour resembled a detention room in a Siberian police station.

The setting for *Lend Me Five Shillings*, which followed *The Bells*, was in contrast quite stunning, and all praise must go to the designer,

Sheila Godbolt. In theory it would seem that a Victorian one-act farce must produce no end of jollity; but in the event this was as singularly witless a piece as one could hope not to see. There was one good line—'Waiter, take this man away and bring me a gentleman'—and an uproarious opening tableau which raised

our hopes cruelly high. But the cast fell into the trap which they so adroitly avoided in *The Bells*: by over-playing they merely emphasised the wretchedness of their material. By way of consolation, Jennifer Wilson looked and behaved stunningly, and Mr Goring sported what must be the best bald wig in London.

## NEW BOOKS—from page 52

and such different authors as Eugene Sue in *Les Mystères de Paris* and Balzac in *La Comédie Humaine* influenced the theatre and were in turn influenced by it. Finally, he shows the continuing influence of melodrama on the development of the cinema.

He makes a passing reference to Goethe, Schiller and Kleist but fails to show how the obsession of German Romanticism with perverted innocence, corrupt genius,

life's monstrous evil and the destructiveness of the will in a world that was cruel, savage and sinister was popularised and vulgarised by the *Theatre des Boulevards*.

The savage instincts and disordered impulses of criminals and madmen which obsessed these dramatists affected the history of opera through Weber's sinister and gloomy *Der Freischütz*. Nor does he seem to be aware of the extent to which the whole melodramatic movement in the theatre could be traced back to such Gothick romances as *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, *The Monk* and *Melmoth the*

*Wanderer*. Byron is, after all, the key figure in the whole movement with the doomed, desperate and despairing heroes of *Manfred*, *Cain*, *Werner* and the *Deformed Transformed*.

For all his copious detail, the author has not mastered the material sufficiently to have thought deeply enough on melodrama's rôle in both theatre and life. To comprehend melodrama, one must examine the extent to which it reflects the dark impulses and destructive drives of human nature.

DAVID LUTYENS

## ALL'S WELL—from page 22

identification these colours have a dual function in helping to clarify the director's attitude to a scene and its mood—eg, Rousillon is a place of autumn sadness, Florence the scene of youthful strutting and folly. The simplicity of these means are only matched by their effectiveness.

Next, please take note of the way this cast works as a team and not as a competitive bunch of scene-stealers. For the

older generation characters Catherine Lacey's Countess beautifully complements Sebastian Shaw's sick King. Her gentleness and sad wisdom offsets the tetchy restlessness of his invalid monarch. And for the younger generation, the new Helena, Lynn Farleigh, has a sense of comedy that is in no way destructive of the character's yearning ardour for what must be Shakespeare's most obnoxious hero.

Ian Richardson finds a way of overcoming this difficulty by finding reasons for Bertram's consistently unsympathetic con-

duct in his immaturity—an adolescent still, he models himself on an adolescent adult, Parolles. At the performance I saw this character was played with just the right touch of cheap braggadocio by Don Henderson—a worthy member of a team that includes Brewster Mason's fine Lafeu and Elizabeth Spriggs' wickedly opportunistic Widow of Florence.

I suppose that what ultimately makes this production so satisfying is that each member of the cast is playing not only the text but the same subtext too.

## briefly

Alan Webb is co-starring with Lillian Gish in a new play by Robert Anderson which opened on Broadway this month. The play's title is *I Never Sang for my Father*, and Webb's role is that of an eccentric octogenarian.

John Russell Taylor's Penguin Dictionary of the Theatre, previously published in paperback, is now available in a revised hardback edition at 42s.

Evelyn Laye and Raymond Francis head the cast of a national tour of *Relatively Speaking* which opened on February 6 at the Ashcroft, Croydon. The production is directed by Donald Sinden.

*Buroctopus* and *Quotidians*, the double bill of plays by Rene Tholy, and *The*

*Royal Pardon* by John Arden and Margaretta D'Arcy, both seen recently at the Arts, under the direction of Caryl Jenner, have been awarded limited guarantees against loss under the Arts Council's scheme for the promotion of new drama.

Laurence Olivier is co-starring with Anthony Quinn in MGM's screen version of Morris West's best-selling novel *The Shoes of the Fisherman*, which is now being filmed on location in Rome and America.



I began working in rep in 1952. The company was one of the last two directly run by the Arts Council, at Salisbury; and when I left it was to join the very last Arts Council theatre, the Midland Theatre Company at Coventry. In between whiles I had done odd jobs at Leatherhead, Croydon, Chesterfield and High Wycombe. The pattern was much the same everywhere: recent or distant West End successes dusted with the occasional Ibsen or Shakespeare, and perhaps once a season a New Play, hopefully trying to overtake *Dial M For Murder* or *Worm's Eye View*. This wasn't as dull as it sounds now. Depending on your taste, and the local set-up, your choice of West End revivals might well include *Streetcar* and *Return to Tyassi*, *Figure of Fun* and *The Little Foxes*, none of them plays for which any normal company could feel too good.

What was much more damaging than the comparative tightness of the repertoire was the distinction between London and non-London. It wasn't a question of first and second class: in Salisbury or Coventry you simply weren't eligible to be considered in any class except that of provincial. Of course, we all felt that this was often unjust: when we met at CORT conferences, there was a great deal of impassioned praising of each others' standards and achievements, a continual rumbling and grumbling against the expensive shoddiness of so much London ware. But it was the discontent of peasants, not Bolsheviks. Our aim was to conquer the London set-up, not to dismantle it. We certainly never thought of ourselves as in any serious way in competition with it: when the top salaries were £25 a week there seemed nothing to compete with.

In 1956 I started the Oxford Playhouse Company with a small financial reserve, a totally free hand, and a wildly ambitious programme of new plays—in the first season alone there were English premieres of Giraudoux, Anouilh and Neveux, world premieres of Robert Bolt, André Obey, Nicholas Moore and the Fitts *Lysistrata*. There was a more or less permanent company, with guest stars of the order of Catherine Lacey, Mary Morris, Sebastian Shaw, Joan Miller and Constance Cummings. Financially it was disaster (we started the second season with a capital sum of minus £800), but a couple of principles were beginning to emerge. One was that the new plays didn't do all that much worse than some of the old ones: the other, that stars didn't necessarily share the attitude of most of the agents and all the managers that to leave London for a bit meant your career was slipping. The national press was also playing a part: if they reviewed a production favourably and extensively, everyone got a little warmer. So in the second season actors like Dirk Bogarde and Mai Zetterling and Keith Michell appeared, and the transfers to

London began, and money accumulated, and the pattern seemed to form itself. You put on new plays with stars and good supporting actors: these were bought, so more stars would arrive and in their turn be swept off in the fiery chariot: and your theatre was flourishing and a standing rebuke to those who thought that only London-born productions were fit to be seen in London.

However, there were also snags. In order to mount a new play so that it was eligible to transfer you needed a company much more high-powered than the salary range would normally run to; and if you did four or five of these a year, what happened in between? What plays did you do and who acted them—revivals of West End successes with a decent rep company? Apart from anything else, audiences would obviously not wear the constant shifting between two sets of standards. So gradually the idea of a permanent troupe fell apart, and we had a separate cast for each play, in itself arguable as a policy, expensive to carry out, and the surest recipe for ulcers known to any director. Furthermore, a large percentage of the new plays never made it: and the cliff-hanging negotiations and final failures were very hard to take after a time.

The most positive thing which emerged was the conception of the best actors available for any play whatever in the programme. As the seasons rolled on, I became more and more certain that we had to escape from the grind of casting every show separately, and yet ensure the highest quality of casting. The turning-point came with a classical revival for which magically a quite excellent cast assembled itself, who were enthusiastic, diversely talented and wanted nothing better than to go on working together: what stopped them, and me, was money. The salaries were still in the out-of-pocket range. A potentially important company disbanded and went off in different directions. I saw more clearly than ever before that for at any rate the Regional Arts Council Theatres there would have to be a radical rethinking of what we were supposed to be doing, and with what resources. Was it old-time rep, only supposedly better: or was it something quite new, a series of National Theatres around the country, competing with the London original at all levels, starting with the financial? Most of my colleagues reached the same conclusions at the same time. The Arts Council took the initiative with the Treasury, and our grants doubled. This meant that our top salary was still only perhaps one half of the London rate, with expenses considerably greater for the actor; but it was a beginning. The principle had at long last been conceded that the provincial companies were entities in their own right, not parasitic on Big Brother, and should as soon as possible be free to

pursue their own aims without the need for a pat on the head or a handsome tip from time to time to justify their existences.

So where did this leave us? In my case, at Oxford, with between ten and twelve plays to mount each season, and a lot of touring mixed up with it. The programme in any town will tend to take its colour from the town, and at Oxford it has become clear that what do best are the classical revivals, and particularly those on a generous scale. *Volpone* did twice the business of *The Homecoming*, *The Wild Duck* twice *Little Malcolm*. As it happens, this fits my present way of thinking very well: once, or at the most twice, a year is as much as I feel like going to the extra strain of a new play. It has another advantage, in casting. New plays take time to read and actors are basically uncertain of their own judgment: but to offer someone Peer Gynt, Didi in *Godot*, and Jack Tanner is much more clear-cut, and usually much more attractive. It seems at the moment easiest to do plays in batches of four, so that the actors are asked to tie themselves up for no more than five months at a time: and with the repertoire system now in full swing, they get a certain amount of time off. (As against that, we have a large and increasing educational programme running: but virtually all the actors involved recognise the importance of this, and many enjoy the work for its own sake.)

The problem is first and last and everlastingly money. Money to make it possible for married actors with families to live down at Oxford. Money to engage extra people who would be mainly concerned with the educational side, which would release the main company for more rehearsal and training. Money to build sets more durably and store them more securely so that they can be revived the following season: it has always seemed to me idiotic that productions like *The Balcony* and *Volpone*, which obviously had a lot more life in them, should disappear because of storage space and the impossibility of contracting actors for longer than a few months. I would like to do an enormous amount more in the way of introducing audiences to the plays they are to see, and hearing their reactions after the performance. Particularly with young people, this significantly alters their entire approach to going to the theatre: but the same half dozen can't keep doing the introductions, and those who do the extra work ought to be paid for it. We've all been told recently that we're lucky to be so well off and to stop grumbling. This isn't grumbling. It's the vexation of seeing a movement in theatre which has come a long way in the past few years and which could transform the whole British theatre scene if the momentum is kept up.



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